NATION

We don't trust Guj govt: HC on Rajkot fire lapse

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BUSINESS

Sensex scales past 76K, Nifty hits new high

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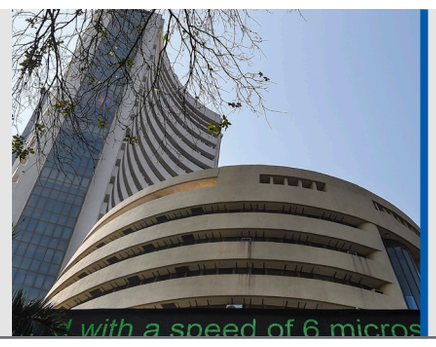

SPORTS

Rafael Nadal loses in the French Open's first round to Alexander Zverev

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Cyclone Remal kills 6, destroys 29,000 homes

Flights resume at Kolkata; Red alert in 2 Tripura districts; Assam gears up for heavy rain

Disaster response force personnel remove branches of a tree that fell on a road due to stong winds owing to Cyclone 'Remal' in Tripura **PHOTO: PTI**

KOLKATA, 27 MAY

At least 6 people died in West Bengal and its coastal areas suffered extensive damage to infrastructure and property, as cyclone Remal tore through the state and neighbouring Bangladesh with winds speeds reaching 135 km per hour, officials said Monday.

A man died of his injuries when a wall collapsed due to relentless downpour on Sunday evening at Bibir Bagan in Central Kolkata, a state disaster management official said.

An elderly woman from Mousuni Island near Namkhana, succumbed to her injuries after a tree fell on her hut. Two more women, one a resident of Maheshtala in South 24 Parganas and another from Panihati in North 24 Parganas, also lost their lives as a result of the natural calamity. In Purba Bardhaman district's Memari, a father and son died from electrocution, officials said.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee assured the people that the administration is fully committed to supporting those affected by the natural disaster. "I've been closely monitoring the situation since yesterday. Three of our fellow citizens have tragically lost their lives in this cyclone. My heartfelt condolences go out to their families," she said at an election rally at Burrabazar here.After tearing through the coasts of Bangladesh and West Bengal, Cyclone Remal left a trail of destruction with pictures of devastation becoming evident across the state's coastal areas, with extensive damage to infrastructure and property, soon after daybreak on Monday.

Nearly 15,000 houses in 24 blocks and 79 municipal wards, mostly in the southern coastal areas of West Bengal, were affected by Cyclone Remal, a senior official of the state government said on Monday. At least 2,140 trees were uprooted in different parts of the state which also witnessed the falling of 337 electric poles, he added. According to the initial evaluation, at least 14,941 houses were damaged, out of which 13,938 were partially affected while 1,003 were destroyed, he said. The administration had shifted 2,07,060 people to the 1,438 safe shelters, he said, adding that at the moment there are 77,288 people. Flight services at the Kolkata airport resumed on Monday morning after remaining suspended for 21 hours in view of Cyclone Remal. Airport sources, however, said it will take some more time for the situation to become normal. Meanwhile, metro services were disrupted due to waterlogging on tracks between Park Street and Esplanade Metro station amid the heavy downpour in Kolkata. The subway of Park Street Metro station was also inundated. *—PTI*

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Heatwave may decline from 30 May, above normal rainfall expected

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Above-normal rainfall is expected this monsoon season across the country in a much-needed respite from the heatwave sweeping the country, Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) said. Director General of Meteorology, IMD, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said, "The South West Monsoon rainfall over country as a whole is likely to be 106 per cent of the long-period average." IMD said that the heatwave across India will likely decline from 30 May, warning of severe heatwave over northwest side over next three days. *—PTI*

Kejri seeks interim bail extension on health grounds

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Ahead of his scheduled return to jail on 2 June, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has moved Supreme Court seeking extension of his interim bail by seven more days on grounds that he has to undergo some medical tests, including a PET-CT scan. The top court had on 10 May granted 21-day interim bail to Kejriwal, who was arrested in a money laundering case linked to the excise policy scam, to enable him to campaign for the Lok Sabha polls. It had directed that Kejriwal shall surrender on 2 June, a day after the last phase of the seven-phase poll gets over. Kejriwal, in his fresh plea filed on 26 May, has sought extension of the interim bail by seven more days on health grounds, including that he has lost seven kgs and that his ketone levels are "too high", a possible indicator of a serious ailment. *—PTI*

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Woman who filed POCSO case against BSY dies

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

A 54-year-old woman who accused senior BJP leader BS Yediyurappa of allegedly sexually abusing her 17-year-old daughter died at a private hospital due to lung cancer, police said on Monday.

Based on her complaint lodged in March, the former Karnataka CM was booked under POCSO Act. According to police, the woman had alleged that Yediyurappa sexually assaulted her daughter during a meeting on 2 February. Denying the charge, 81-year-old BJP Parliamentary Board member had said he would fight the case legally. "The woman was diagnosed with lung cancer in the past and was undergoing treatment at a private hospital. On Sunday night, she passed away

BS Yediyurappa **PHOTO: PTI**

and as per doctors treating her, she was in the advanced stage of lung cancer," they said.

On 14 March, hours after the Sadashivanagar police registered the case under section 8 of the POCSO Act and Section 354 A (sexual harassment) of the Indian Penal Code, the Karnataka Director General of Police Alok Mohan issued an order transferring it to Crime Investigation Department for further investigation with immediate effect. *—PTI*

Portion of stage caves in during Rahul's rally in UP

PALIGANJ, 27 MAY

A portion of the stage partially caved in during the rally of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in Bihar's Paliganj on Monday. The incident took place when Rahul Gandhi was here for the Lok Sabha election campaign in the Patliputra parliamentary constituency, where Lalu Prasad Yadav's daughter Misa Bharti is contesting on the RJD ticket. Gandhi was seen walking on the stage when the structure suddenly collapsed. While Misa Bharti was seen holding the hands of Gandhi. Meanwhile, former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav was also present at the stage. Misa will contest Lok Sabha election from the Pataliputra constituency against Ram Kripal Yadav. The Pataliputra constituency in Bihar will go to the polls in the last phase on 1 June. In 2014, Ram Kripal revolted after Lalu Prasad decided to field his elder daughter Misa Bharti from the Patliputra seat as RJD nominee and Yadav joined BJP. *—ANI*

The screengrab shows the leaders standing on the stage, holding hands, just as they were about to start the meeting, the stage collapsed **PHOTO: PTI**

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'DEPRESSED & ISOLATED'

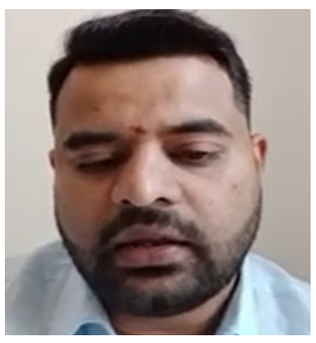
Prajwal releases video, says will meet SIT on 31 May

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

Exactly a month after, Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, an alleged rape accused who has been absconding for weeks, has released a 2.57 minutes video in which he said that he will return and appear before the Special Investigation Team (SIT) at 10 am on 31 May.

Terming the cases against him as "false" and part of a "political conspiracy", he said he had gone into depression. "I will personally come before the SIT on Friday, 31 May at 10 am and cooperate with the investigation and also respond to it (charges). I have faith in the judiciary and I am confident that I will come out of false cases, through court," Pajwal said in a video statement that is now widely being circulated.

There was no independent confirmation from JD(S) or the family of the suspended party MP immediately over the matter.



Prajwal Revanna speaking in a video where he said he will return and appear before the SIT **PHOTO: PTI**

"Let the blessings of God, people and my family be on me. After coming, I will try to put an end to all this. Keep faith in me," he added in his video statement in Kannada.

Apologising to his parents, grandfather Deve Gowda, uncle HD Kumaraswamy, people of the State, and party workers, Prajwal said, "I have come before you to share information, as I had not disclosed as to where I'm in foreign (country)."

"I welcome Prajwal's statement. As all of you know, at the time when people were saying that in the history of Karnataka such an incident had not occurred, all efforts were on to bring him back. The CM wrote two letters to the Prime Minister (seeking cancellation of Prajwal's diplomatic passport). We had requested the CBI and through them to the Interpol to issue a Blue Corner Notice, and it was issued," Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshara said. *—Salar News with PTI*

OWAISI'S PARTY LEADER YUNUS SHOT AT THRICE

NASIK, 27 MAY

Abdul Malik Mohammed Yunus Isa, the former mayor of Maharashtra's Malegaon was shot by unidentified attackers on Monday. Malik, a prominent leader in Asaduddin Owaisi's All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), suffered three bullet wounds. The incident occurred at 1:20am while Malik was seated outside a shop, as per police. They have launched an extensive investigation, but no arrests have been made so far. AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi said that the attack was a "conspiracy" and urged Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the police to take immediate steps.

"AIMIM Malegaon President & former mayor Abdul Malik was shot thrice last night. He has been taken to Nashik for treatment. I spoke to his brother Khalid on phone. We stand firmly with Malik's family. @DGPMaharashtra must take immediate steps. *—Salar News with agencies*

Punjab minister Balkar Singh in soup over obscene video

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has expressed grave concern over the allegations made against Punjab MLA Balkar Singh of engaging in inappropriate sexual conduct and sought a prompt and impartial probe into the matter.

The allegations were brought to light by BJP leader Tajinder Pal Singh Bagga, who accused Balkar Singh, a member of AAP, of engaging in inappropriate sexual conduct.

According to Bagga, Singh was involved in a sexual activity during a video call with a woman seeking employment.

The NCW, led by its chairperson Rekha Sharma, has vehemently condemned the purported behaviour.

The NCW said in a post on X that Sharma called for urgent intervention from the Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) to ensure a prompt and impartial investigation into the matter.

The NCW has requested a comprehensive report on the incident to be submitted within three days.

"The National Commission for Women is gravely disturbed by a Twitter post alleging inappropriate conduct by Punjab MLA Mr Balkar Singh. The reported acts, if substantiated, constitute serious violations under IPC sections 354 and 354B, directly affronting a woman's dignity. @sharmarekha vehemently condemn such behavior and call for urgent intervention from @DGPPunjabPolice to ensure a prompt and impartial investigation. A comprehensive report to be submitted in 3 days," the NCW said in a post on X. *—PTI*

Balkar Singh **PHOTO: ANI**

- The NCW, led by Sharma, has vehemently condemned the purported behaviour. NCW said on X that Sharma called for urgent intervention from the Punjab DGP to ensure a prompt and impartial investigation into the matter

'With tech, criminal law will give justice in 3 yrs'

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

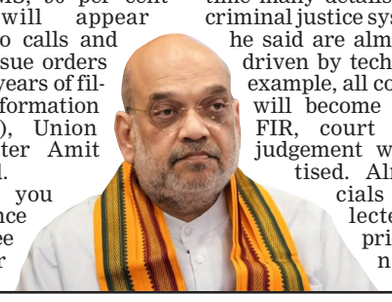
Technology will be a key enabler for the new criminal laws that come into effect 1 July as summons will be issued by SMS, 90 per cent witnesses will appear through video calls and courts will issue orders within three years of filing of First Information Report (FIR), Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said.

"I can tell you with confidence that after three years, our criminal justice system will be the most modern criminal justice system in the world," he told PTI in an interview over the weekend.

Shah laid out for the first time many details of the new criminal justice system, which he said are almost entirely driven by technology. For example, all court matters will become online and FIR, court diary and judgement will be digitised. Already, officials have collected finger prints data of nine crore criminals across the country in the last five years.

After lifting finger prints from a crime scene, police will be able to identify the criminal and also if the crime has been committed by a repeat offender from that data base of finger prints within seven and half minutes, he said

He said earlier charge sheet meant submission of volumes of documents, but once the new laws come into force the charge sheet will be contained in a pen drive and the response to it can also be delivered digitally on a pen drive. *—PTI*



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HC BAN UPHELD

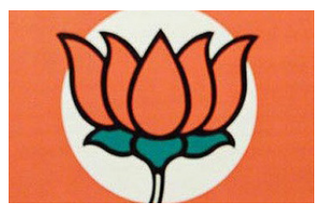
SC lambasts 'disparaging' BJP ads

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain BJP's plea challenging a Calcutta High Court order on a ban on the party's poll advertisements and said that "prima facie, the advertisements are disparaging".

Calcutta High Court had refused to interfere with a single-judge verdict restraining BJP from issuing advertisements that were allegedly violating the model code during the Lok Sabha polls, following which BJP moved the top court.

A vacation bench of Supreme Court Justice JK Maheshwari and Justice KV Viswanathan refused to interfere with the High Court order.



Calcutta High Court had refused to interfere with a single-judge verdict **PHOTO: PTI**

"We have seen the advertisements. Prima facie, the advertisements are disparaging. You can say you are the best and promote yourself. We don't want to lend our hands to promote further acrimony. We see no reason to interfere," the bench said.

Senior advocate PS Patwalia, appearing for BJP, submitted that the single judge of the High Court passed the restraining order without taking into account that there was no such prayer. He said the advertisements were based on facts.

Senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and Amit Anand Tiwari appeared for the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in the matter.

BJP had moved the top court against an order of Calcutta High Court which had said it was not inclined to entertain the appeal against the interim order passed by the single-judge bench. The single-judge bench on 20 May restrained BJP from publishing advertisements that violated the model code of conduct until 4 June.

The court had also restrained the saffron party from publishing the advertisements mentioned by the ruling TMC in West Bengal in its petition that claimed unverified allegations were made against it and its workers. *—PTI*

Chicken price goes up to Rs 300 per kg in City

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

The price of chicken sold in the market for consumption in City has gone up to Rs 300 per kg as hot weather has affected supply. A shop owner said that the business is not going well. "Business is not going well. Usually on Sunday, we used to sell 400 to 500 kg of chicken and now it has been reduced to 150 to 200 kg. The quantity of chicken has been reduced in the farm due to hot weather and so the supply has become less. The retail price has become Rs 300 to Rs 320 and there is no customer. In the wholesale, it is Rs 220 per kg with skin and without skin it is Rs 255, even then the customer is not coming," he said. *—ANI*

BBMP sets up 8 task forces to fix potholes

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) sets up eight Task Force Committees at the Zonal Level for blocking, monitoring, and implementation of road potholes. Speaking to the media, on Monday Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath said, "creation of a Zonal 'Task Force' committee to oversee Greater Bengaluru Municipal Corporation's entire operation, monitoring, and implementation of pothole closure". This action comes after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's instruction that all potholes on ward roads, arterial and sub-arterial roads must be filled within one month. Currently, there are 5,500 potholes on ward roads, 557 potholes on arterial and sub-arterial roads that require immediate attention and these potholes will be under force committee.*—Salar News*

Wild elephants found in Mandya's Maddur town

MANDYA, 27 MAY

A herd of wild elephants was spotted early Monday morning near the Shimsha river near Hole Anjaneya temple in Maddur town of Mandya district. It is said that there are six elephants in the herd, and they have come to Maddur from Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. The forest department planned to send back elephants to the forest in the evening as the early operation may cause a casualty. According to the forest department elephants are currently roaming in and around the Hole Anjaneya temple. They also advised the locals and farmers to be careful. Recently, conflicts between wild animals and humans have increased in various districts of the State including Mandya. Many people have died in the last few days due to jungle attacks. In the limits of Hassan and Chikkamagaluru districts too, the elephant threat has exceeded the limit. *—Salar News*

Priyank Kharge mocks Modi's 'devputra' claims

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

Rural Development Minister Priyank Kharge took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, criticising his transformation from 'Pradhan Sevak' to 'Devputra' or a divine being. Kharge's comments were made in a post on X, where he ridiculed Modi's claim of being 'sent by God.' Kharge mocked Modi's assertion of not being biologically born but rather divinely sent, suggesting that Modi's repeated assertions of his divinity might stem from either desperation or madness. He remarked on Modi's conviction and his ability to persuade his supporters. "Modi is convinced and has also managed to convince his Bhakts like Sambit Patra to proclaim that even Lord Jagannath is a Modi Bhakt and he speaks of himself in the third person," Kharge said. To underline his point, Kharge referenced a quote by American leader Abraham Lincoln: "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." *—Salar News*

Bengalureans reel from surging veggie prices

Heavy rainfall has disrupted household budget across City

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

The prices of essential vegetables in Bengaluru have surged due to heavy rainfall impacting yields and supply chains.

Beans, a staple in many households, have seen a significant price increase from Rs 177 per kilogram a week ago to Rs 227. Tomatoes and cabbage have also experienced sharp price hikes.

Around 75 residents of Bharati Nagar, led by Bharati Nagar Residents Forum President NS Ravi, protested at Doddigunta, Cox Town, on Monday against the soaring vegetable prices. The protesters demanded government intervention to stabilise the prices. The peaceful protest concluded with a memorandum being submitted to Agriculture Department officials.

The skyrocketing prices have disrupted household budgets across the City. "I'm tired of adjusting my household budget to accommodate these exorbitant prices. How can a middle-class family like mine afford this?" said Smita Rao, a home cook from Jayanagar 4th Block.

"I have never seen such a drastic increase in vegetable prices in my life. The cost of basic necessities like onions and potatoes has doubled in just a few months. It's becoming difficult to provide healthy meals for my family without breaking the bank," said Kavitha Kumar, a homemaker from Vajarahalli.

Consumers are forced to limit their vegetable purchases or switch to lower-quality options. "We have to limit our choices and quantity, even for basics like tomatoes and cabbage," said Shalini Sebastian, a homemaker from Maruthi Sevanagar..

Umesh Mirji, the Managing Director of HOPCOMS (Horticultural Producers' Cooperative Marketing Society) and the Horticulture Department of Bengaluru, said the quantity of vegetables arriving in the City has reduced.

The situation is worsened by the difficulty in storing vegetables during the damp weather. While rain is crucial for crop growth, excessive rainfall can cause waterlogging and soil erosion, reducing crop yields. "Even the persistent dry spell in our State played an important role in damaging the crops," Mirji added. *—Salar News*

Vegetable	Price per kg on 20 May	Price per kg on 27 May
Garlic	₹268	₹329
Carrot	₹42	₹52
Ladies finger	₹48	₹60
Ginger	₹129	₹160
Tomato	₹22	₹40
Beetroot	₹30	₹40
Cauliflower	₹ 26	₹34
Coriander leaves	₹25 one bunch	₹50 one bunch
Spinach leaves	₹30 one bunch	₹50 one bunch

Sources: City Market vendors

Members of Bharathi Nagar Residents Forum protest against increasing prices of vegetables *PHOTO: SALAR*

CUSTODIAL DEATH ROW

25 held for attack on Channagiri police stn

DAVANGERE, 27 MAY

PHOTO: SALAR

Police have so far arrested at least 25 people in connection with a mob attack on Channagiri police station, officials said on Monday.

A police station was vandalised in Channagiri town in Davangere district and several vehicles were damaged by a violent mob over an alleged custodial death, during the small hours of Saturday. At least 11 police personnel were injured in the incident.

The Criminal Investigation Department has now been handed over the probe into the case. They said five police teams were formed to investigate the incident, and arrests have been made based on CCTV footage and video clips available.

Adil, 30, was detained on 24 May for his alleged involvement in gambling activities in the district, police said, his health condition deteriorated subsequently and he died.

As the news of the man's death spread, his relatives along with a large group of people went on a rampage, damaging police vehicles and hurling stones at police station, alleging that he died in custody. Deputy Superintendent of Police and the Channagiri police station inspector have been suspended following the attack.

Reacting to the incident, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar announced that strict action will be taken against those responsible for the attack. Speaking to reporters at the KPCC office, he said, "The Chief Minister has ordered an inquiry into the attack on the police station in Channagiri. The investigation is ongoing, and the culprits will be brought to book at any cost. Congress party treats people of all sects equally, but no one can take the law into their own hands. The government is committed to punishing the culprits."

—Salar News with PTI

VP urges firms, 'public leaders' to back R&D

BELAGAVI, 27 MAY

Jagdeep Dhankhar *PHOTO: PTI*

- He stressed the need to develop a culture where every Indian is fit and healthy, stating that the entire country at the moment is part of a marathon march for 'Viksit Bharat' in 2047

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday appealed to the corporates and "public leaders" to do all that they can to support research and development, as it will reflect in the growth of the country's economy and even in its diplomatic power.

He stressed the need to develop a culture where every Indian is fit and healthy, stating that the entire country at the moment is part of a marathon march for 'Viksit Bharat' in 2047.

Speaking at the 18th foundation day celebration of ICMR-National Institute of Traditional Medicine here, he said, "We are living in big times. India, home to one sixth of humanity, is no longer a sleeping giant. No longer a country without potential. It is a country on the rise and the rise is unstoppable."

Recalling his parliamentary days and the time when he was a Union minister in 1991, Dhankar said the size of our economy in 1990 was smaller than that of London and Paris.

"... look at where we are at the moment, the fifth largest global economy, ahead of the UK. They ruled us for over 100 years. (We are) ahead of France, and it is a matter of time we will be ahead of Japan and Germany also. No small achievement," he said.

Dhankar also stressed the need to contain not just the disease but the source of it and said the focus should be on precaution and prevention.

He further said, "We are having big... achievements in space, on land, on roads, on infrastructure, on sea, in defence... it should not be difficult for us to involve every village in this pious task to make us health conscious, health aware." *—PTI*

City cops issue prohibitory order ahead of election results on 4 June

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

Bengaluru City police has issued prohibitory orders for the counting of votes on 4 June. According to the press release by the City police, it has been stated that the restraining order will be in subject to the following provisions; gathering of more than five people, processions and gatherings within the jurisdiction of the City, including the election candidates/supporters; carrying and moving around with a weapon, hammer, club, sword, mace, gun, knife, lathi, club knife or any other implement like stones, explosives, any incendiary materials etc. which may cause danger to the body.

The list also prohibits actions like; provocative/hate speech and to openly proclaim, chant, argue, comment, make gestures or fake display and do things that may attack the public assembly or policy as related to politics; provocative and inflammatory songs, shouts and display images, signs, effigies, etc. of persons in public and engage in any act which disturbs public dignity and morals and disturbs law and order; loudspeakers cannot be used during this period; prohibition on any activities which may offend the caste-religion, communal creed or public morals of any person is also in effect. This prohibition does not apply to funeral processions.

- The counting of votes will be held at Mount Carmel College, St Joseph's Indian High School and SSMRV College

General Lok Sabha Elections-2024, counting votes will be held on 4 June at Mount Carmel College (Vasanth Nagar), St. Joseph's Indian High School, (Vittal Mallya Road), SSMRV College (Jayanagar). *—Salar News*

Rave: Actor seeks time to appear before CCB

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

A well-known Telugu actress Hema has sought time to appear before the Anti-Narcotics Wing of the Central Crime Branch (CCB) of the City police in connection with the rave party which was raided near Electronic City recently.

The actress has wanted seven days' time from CCB citing that she was down with viral fever. Police had issued notices to eight people, including the actress who tested positive for consumption of drugs in the rave party. Police said that they will serve a second notice to the actress.

The police had on 20 May raided the rave party at GM farmhouse near the Electronic City and seized narcotic substances from the spot. It is learnt that influential people in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are putting pressure on the authorities to protect the Telugu actress.

The investigation into the source of drugs could possibly expose a huge drug racket and the arrested persons wield considerable influence. Of the 98 blood samples collected from people at the rave party, 86 of them tested positive for drugs.

The police raided the rave party titled 'Sunset to Sunrise Victory', which was attended by around 100 people, including techies, Telugu actors, and others. MDMA, cocaine, ganja, charas, and other narcotic substances were allegedly used by those who attended the party. *—Salar News*

- The actress has wanted seven days' time from CCB citing that she was down with viral fever

Hema *PHOTO: SALAR*

We have to convert Congress into cadre-based party: DKS

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

CM Siddaramaiah & DyCM DK Shivakumar pay tribute to Jawaharlal Nehru on 60th death anniversary *PHOTO: PTI*

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar announced the launch of a new initiative called 'Congress Family' aimed at strengthening the party at the booth level. Speaking at the death anniversary of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on Monday, Shivakumar highlighted the party's commitment to grassroots organisation. Shivakumar said, "Under this initiative, 50 party workers will be identified and enrolled in each booth. These booth workers will be integral to all party activities. A meeting of party workers is scheduled for 1 June to discuss this initiative with all party leaders."

Shivakumar also revealed plans for Chief Minister to meet with party workers weekly. "I have already discussed this plan with Chief Minister, and we will organise these meetings soon. This initiative aims to address the difficulty of meeting party workers, who come from far-off places, due to busy schedules and this meeting will be held by me and Siddaramaiah," he explained. These meetings, exclusively for Congress party workers and primary members, will be scheduled a week in advance to plan.

Shivakumar noted that this government will not be a 4-year government; it is a 10-year government and the party will start preparing now. "Winning these seats will give us a majority in the Legislative Council, making it easier to pass bills," he added. *—Salar News*

DyCM & CM pay tribute to Nehru on 60th death anniversary

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar paid tribute to former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, stating, "Nehru's legacy is an inspiration for the party and its workers. He laid a solid foundation for country, but BJP leaders are trying hard to change history. However, history can't be changed." Siddaramaiah noted Nehru's contributions, such as establishing public sector enterprises, dams etc. *—Salar News*

Valmiki Corporation Superintendent ends life

SHIVAMOGGA, 27 MAY

PHOTO: SALAR

The Superintendent of Valmiki Development Corporation Bengaluru, Chandrasekhar, 52, died by suicide at his house in Kenchappa Layout, on Monday morning. He was allegedly involved in a financial scandal within the corporation. The corporation has been embroiled in a Rs 187 crore scam, and it is said that stress and possible implications of the scandal may have led to Chandrasekhar's death. In a note, Chandrasekhar has named officials Padmanabha, Parashuram, and Shuchiswat, indicating their link to his death. The exact contents and implications of the note were not released. A case is registered at the Vinobanagar police station, and investigations are underway regarding Chandrasekhar's suicide and its alleged connection to the financial irregularities in the Valmiki Development Corporation. *—Salar News*

'NOT AN ISSUE'

K'taka govt to pay PM's Rs 80 lakh bill

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

Eshwar Khandre *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

- It is a tradition of State government to host dignitaries like Prime Minister and President when they come. But due to Assembly elections, State government was not involved

Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre on Monday said the State government will pay the hospitality bill of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had come to Mysuru in April last year to commemorate 50 years of Project Tiger, which runs up to Rs 80 lakh.

In a statement, the minister's office said it is a tradition of the State government to host dignitaries like Prime Minister and President when they come. But due to Assembly elections in Karnataka in April last year, the State government was not involved in planning of the programme (Project Tiger) since Model Code of Conduct (MCC) was in force.

Speaking to reporters, the minister said that Modi had visited Myrusu-Bandipur on the eve of commemoration of 50 years of Project Tiger. At that point of time, MCC was in force. Elections were declared. So, it was purely a Central government programme. Initially, they had planned to spend around Rs 3 crore but the expenditure incurred was around 6.33 crore. So, balance 3.3 crore has to come from the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

"The State government's forest department had written to them (authority). They informed that the hotel bill (Rs 80 lakh) should be reimbursed by the State government and we have decided to reimburse. So, there is no issue," he added. Following media reports that the hotel where Modi had stayed has threatened to find legal recourse to recover his dues, Khandre had on Saturday said that he will try to resolve the issue amicably. *—PTI*

Funds meant for Arjuna memorial siphoned off

COOVERCOLLY INDRESH
MYSURU, 27 MAY

WhatsApp group called 'Arjuna Pade' is luring people into paying for the memorial *PHOTO: SALAR*

The construction of a memorial for the late Dasara elephant Arjun has sparked significant discussion in Hassan. Multiple accusations have emerged against an individual allegedly capitalising on this delay to collect money illegally.

Naveen HN from Mysuru has reportedly created a WhatsApp group called "Arjuna Pade," soliciting support for the Arjun memorial initiative. Many people believed in this cause and contributed money. However, the President of the Malenadu Rakshana Vedike has accused Naveen of amassing substantial sums into his account through this appeal. A formal complaint has been lodged against him for collecting funds improperly.

It's been five months since Arjun's death, but the Karnataka government has yet to commence the construction of the memorial. Naveen also approached actor Darshan's assistant, claiming to seek help for the memorial. He allegedly obtained a stone for the memorial from them and later sold it to the forest department for 30,000 rupees.

The incident has led to public outrage, with many questioning the legitimacy of Naveen's fundraising efforts. Photos showing hundreds of people depositing money into his account have gone viral, fuelling the controversy. People are demanding answers and action, emphasising that no one should deposit money into personal accounts for such causes without proper authorisation and transparency. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Teacher suspended over remarks on PM, Yogi in UP

KAUSHAMBI, 27 MAY

A teacher posted in a government primary school in Kaushambi district in Uttar Pradesh was suspended on Monday after a case was registered against her for making indecent remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on social media.

Basic education officer Kamlemdra Kushwaha issued the suspension order against the teacher named Varsha. Kushwaha said that taking cognisance of the social media post of Varsha, the principal of a government primary school posted in a village in Sirathu tehsil, an official lodged a complaint at the Kokhraj police station. *—PTI*

PMLA court extends remand of J'khand min Alam

RANCHI, 27 MAY

A special PMLA court in Ranchi on Monday extended Jharkhand minister Alamgir Alam's remand with Enforcement Directorate (ED) for three more days in connection with an alleged money laundering case, his legal representatives said.

Alam had been taken into custody by the ED on 15 May following two days of interrogation at the agency's office. Initially remanded for six days by the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court starting 17 May, his remand was subsequently extended for five days on 22 May. The ED's focus on Alam intensified following the arrests of his personal secretary, Sanjeev Kumar Lal, 52, and Lal's domestic help, Jahangir Alam, 42. During a raid on 6 May at a flat associated with them, the central agency uncovered over Rs 32 crore in cash. *—PTI*

M'rashtra council polls: MNS fields director Abhijit

MUMBAI, 27 MAY

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) on Monday announced film director Abhijit Panse as its candidate from Konkan Graduates' constituency for the legislative council elections scheduled on 26 June.

The constituency is currently represented by BJP's Niranjan Davkhare. Notably, ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, MNS chief Raj Thackeray had last month offered unconditional support to the ruling `Mahayuti' alliance of the BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP in Maharashtra. On Monday, MNS general secretary Shirish Sawant announced party member Panse's candidature for the MLC polls to the Konkan Graduates' constituency. The last date for filing the nominations is 7 June. Voting will be held on 26 June and results will be declared on 1 July. *—PTI*

RaGa defamation case hearing now on 7 June

SULTANPUR, 27 MAY

An MP-MLA court as fixed for 7 June hearing in the 2018 defamation case against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his alleged objectionable remarks against Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The defamation complaint against Gandhi was filed by BJP leader Vijay Mishra.

Gandhi's lawyer Kashi Prasad Shukla gave an application in the court, saying Congress leader was busy campaigning for Lok Sabha polls and needed time to appear before the court. The court had issued a warrant against Gandhi in December last.

Subsequently, Congress leader had halted his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Amethi on 20 February and appeared in court which granted him bail. The complaint was filed on 4 August, 2018, against Gandhi for his alleged objectionable comments against Shah. *—PTI*

Terrorists, stone pelters' kin won't get govt jobs in J&K: HM

Shah says terrorism saw a decline in J&K under Modi govt

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Sending a tough message, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said that no family member of any terrorist nor close relatives of stone pelters will get government jobs in Jammu and Kashmir.

Shah also said that the Narendra Modi government has not only targeted terrorists but also eliminated the terror ecosystem, resulting in a drastic fall in terror incidents in the country.

"In Kashmir, we have taken a decision that if someone joins a terrorist organisation, their family members will not get any government job," he told PTI.

Similarly, Shah said, if someone indulges in stone pelting, his family members will also not get a government job.

He said some human rights activists went to the Supreme Court against the decision but, at the end, the government prevailed.

Shah, however, said the government will make an exception in case someone from a family comes forward and informs the authorities that his or her close relative has joined a terror outfit.

Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah addresses a public rally for Lok Sabha polls, in Dharamshala PHOTO: PTI

Such families will be given relief, he said.

Earlier, funeral processions used to be taken out in Kashmir after a terrorist was killed, Shah said.

"We have stopped this trend. We have ensured that the terrorist is buried with all religious formalities but in an isolated place," he said.

The Home Minister said when a terrorist is surrounded by the security forces, he is first given a chance to surrender.

"We call family members like his mother or wife and ask them to make an appeal to the terrorist to surrender. If he (the terrorist) does not listen, he dies," Shah said.

He said terror incidents have gone down significantly in Jammu and Kashmir as the government has not only targeted the terrorists but also eliminated the terror ecosystem. "Through the National Investigation Agency, we have taken strong action against terror funding and ended it, he said. In case of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI), Shah said the government has imposed a ban on publication and spread of the terrorist ideology by it.

Muslim radical group PFI, was banned under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) by the Centre in September 2022 over its alleged links with terror activities. According to Union Home Ministry data, there were 228 terrorist initiated incidents in Jammu and Kashmir in 2018 and the number came down to around 50 in 2023. *—PTI*

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann in Bathinda, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

Kejri seeks 7-day interim bail extension

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Ahead of his scheduled return to jail on 2 June, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has moved the Supreme Court seeking extension of his interim bail by seven more days on grounds that he has to undergo some medical tests, including a PET-CT scan.

The top court had on 10 May granted 21-day interim bail to the Chief Minister, who was arrested in a money laundering case linked to the excise policy scam, to enable him to campaign for the Lok Sabha polls.

It had directed that Kejriwal shall surrender on 2 June, a day after the last phase of the seven-phase poll gets over.

The Chief Minister, in his fresh plea filed on 26 May, has sought extension of the interim bail by seven more days on health grounds, including that he has lost seven kgs and that his ketone levels are "too high", a possible indicator of a serious ailment.

The plea said the Chief Minister is required to undergo some medical tests including a PET-CT scan, and that the interim bail, which is ending on 1 June, be extended. PET-CT scan shows detailed pictures of organs and tissues.

While setting him free for campaigning in the remaining phases of the Lok Sabha elections after 50 days of custody in the case, the court had barred him from visiting his office or the Delhi secretariat, and signing official files unless absolutely necessary for obtaining the lieutenant governor's approval.

While imposing a strong of bail conditions on Kejriwal, the apex court had directed him to furnish bail bonds of Rs 50,000 with one surety of the like amount to the satisfaction of the jail superintendent.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta had rejected the argument of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) counsel that enlarging Kejriwal on interim bail to campaign in the elections will be without a precedent. *—PTI*

Maliwal assault case: Court rejects Bibhav Kumar's bail

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

A court here on Monday dismissed the bail plea of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's close aide Bibhav Kumar who is accused of assaulting AAP MP Swati Maliwal at the Chief Minister's residence. Meanwhile, Maliwal broke down in Delhi's Tis Hazari court during the bail hearing.

Metropolitan Magistrate Gaurav Goyal rejected the bail plea of Kumar, after hearing arguments from both sides in the court. A detailed order on the matter is awaited.

During the proceedings, Rajya Sabh MP Maliwal told the court that there was a threat to her life and "grave danger" to her family if Kumar was released.

She claimed that a "one-sided video" about the incident "was made by a YouTuber", following which she started receiving the threats.

Bibhav Kumar PHOTO: PTI

A couple of videos from the Chief Minister's residence from the day of the incident on 31 May have surfaced on social media, one showed Maliwal having an argument with security personnel, while the other showed her walking out of the Chief Minister's residence in the Civil Lines.

Maliwal's advocate said that despite the fact that Kumar was in jail, Maliwal was receiving threats.

He questioned Kumar's innocence, alleging that Kumar had formatted his phone and deleted the CCTV footage of the incident.

Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava said that Maliwal did not trespass the CM's residence. He also said that Kumar was an "influential" person despite the termination of his services.

Kumar's counsel sought bail, saying his client fulfilled the "triple test" for bail -- he was not a flight risk, nor is likely to tamper with evidence or influence witnesses. *—PTI*

PM not talking on failure of 'Make in India', says Kharge

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday hit out at Modi government on the state of the economy, exports and the rising trade deficit besides the 'Make in India' programme and accused him of practising "fake" nationalism by making China its biggest trade partner.

Drawing a parallel between the Congress-led UPA and 10 years of the BJP-led NDA government, he said the manufacturing growth (at constant 2015 USD) during the Congress-UPA rule from 2004 to 2014 was 7.85 per cent while that during the Modi's NDA rule from 2014 to 2022 was 6.0 per cent. "The 'Make in India' programme has flopped and exports are in a free fall," he alleged. *—PTI*

INDIA bloc to meet on 1 June, TMC unlikely to attend

New Delhi, 27 May

Top leaders of the Opposition INDIA bloc are likely to meet on 1 June to assess their performance in the Lok Sabha elections and chalk out their strategy ahead of the results. Also, Trinamool Congress (TMC) is unlikely to attend a meeting, sources said, as it coincides with the last phase of voting in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. Opposition leaders will discuss their strategy ahead of the 4 June results and assess their performance. Opposition alliance has been claiming that it would be able to stop BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) from returning to power at the Centre. *—PTI*

DMK slams Guv, says he is attempting to 'change Thiruvalluvar Day'

CHENNAI, 27 MAY

Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK on Monday lashed out at Governor RN Ravi over Raj Bhavan days ago holding "Vaikasi Anusham Valluvar Thirunaal," the Thiruvalluvar Day festival and alleged he was trying to change the official date of celebration to honour the great Tamil poet.

Hitting out at Ravi, DMK's Tamil mouthpiece 'Murasoli' said Governor showered flowers on a portrait of Thiruvalluvar that was 'stained' by saffron, a reference to the depiction of the saint in saffron clothes in a painting at the Raj Bhavan in connection with Thiruvalluvar Day festival.

"Today, what does Safron symbolise? It represents divisiveness! Is it not an insult to Thiruvalluvar, who stood for equality, to portray him in saffron clothes, the editorial in DMK's official organ on 27 May asked.

"Thiruvalluvar Day is being celebrated alongside Pongal festival (in January) and it is as per Government Orders and Governor is attempting to change that itself. He does not have the heart to use the legal term of Tamil Nadu for the state and how will he wholeheartedly praise Tiruvalluvar?

Governor RN Ravi PHOTO: ANI

The Governor had said on 24 May that according to "thousand years old tradition, the auspicious Vaikasi Anusham is the Thiruvalluvar Day."

While Thiruvalluvar Day, for over 50 years is officially celebrated in the state in January, Raj Bhavan held an event to honour the saint poet on 'Vaikasi Anusham,' in May and this was first such function to be held at the official residence of the Governor. *—PTI*

INDIA bloc will give ₹8,500 to women every month, says Rahul

BAKHTIYARPUR, 27 MAY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday claimed that INDIA bloc, if voted to power, would scrap Agnipath scheme of recruitment in defence services and deposit Rs 8,500 to every woman's account in each month.

Addressing an election rally at Bakhtiyarpur in Bihar, he asserted that Narendra Modi will not be able to become the prime minister again, since there is a clear wave in favour of the INDIA bloc across the country.

> **Modi made all-out efforts to topple the democratically-elected Congress government in Himachal Pradesh by indulging in corrupt practices and using money power**
>
> -Priyanka Gandhi, Congress leader

"When INDIA block will form the government, the Agnipath scheme will be withdrawn," Gandhi said.

The scheme, announced by Modi government in 2022, envisages recruiting young soldiers on a contractual basis for four years and retire 75 per cent of them without certain benefits enjoyed by those who were not employed under this programme.

After the formation of INDIA block government at the Centre, Gandhi said, "From July, Rs 8,500 will be deposited in women's accounts every month. This will change the financial condition of every family. Taking a jibe at the Prime Minister's 'sent by God' comment, the Congress leader remarked in jest, "After 4 June, if ED asks Modi about corruption, he will say 'I don't know anything...I was sent by God'." *—PTI*

Fight communal forces like Kerala does: Revanth

KOZHIKODE, 27 MAY

People from other states in India should emulate the responsibility shown by the people of Kerala in keeping communal forces at bay, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said here on Monday.

He said that every time he visited Kerala, he took home inspiration and learned a lesson on how to prevent communal forces from entering his state.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the Snehasadas, organised by the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), a Congress ally, Reddy congratulated the party led by Panakkad Syed Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal for organising such an event when some are trying to divide this country by opening shops of hatred in the market of love.

He said the communal forces, who wanted to divide this country and change its Constitution, have been trying hard to enter Kerala, but the people here have not allowed them to do so. *—PTI*

Party promises not a corrupt practice: SC

PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The Supreme Court has said that commitments made by political parties in their election manifestos will not amount to "corrupt practice" under the election laws.

The plea alleged that commitments by Congress in its election manifesto for the 2023 Karnataka Assembly polls were direct and indirect financial help to the public which amounted to corrupt electoral practice. The petitioner, Shashanka J Sreedhara, had filed an petition against the winning candidate BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan. *—PTI*

NUMBERS BLACKLISTED

Government cracks down on SMS scammers

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

In a major crackdown on SMS scammers, the government has blacklisted 'principal entities' behind SMS headers that were used for sending over 10,000 fraudulent messages over the past three months, according to an official release.

The Department of Telecom (DoT), in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has taken decisive action to protect citizens from potential SMS fraud through the Sanchar Saathi initiative, it said.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under MHA provided information about the misuse of eight SMS headers for sending fraudulent communications for committing cybercrime.

It was noted that more than 10,000 fraudulent messages were sent using these eight headers in the past three months. The principal entities which were the owners of these eight SMS headers have been blacklisted.

'Principal entities' in telecom parlance refer to business or legal entities sending out commercial messages to telecom subscribers through SMS. A header means an alphanumeric string assigned to a 'principal entity' to send commercial communications.

All the 73 SMS Headers and 1,522 SMS content templates owned by these principal entities were also blacklisted.

" None of these principal entities, SMS headers or templates can now be used to send SMS...," it said.

The DoT has prevented further potential victimisation of citizens by blacklisting these entities, and reiterated its commitment to safeguarding citizens against cybercrime.

"Citizens can report suspected fraud communications at Chakshu facility on Sanchar Saathi to help DoT in prevention of misuse of telecom resources for cyber-crime and financial frauds," the release said.

It warned that use of mobile numbers for telemarketing activities is not permitted. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

PDP distances itself from anti-Gujjar slogan video

SRINAGAR, 27 MAY

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Sunday distanced itself from a purported video showing anti-Gujjar slogans being raised during a Lok Sabha election campaign of the party.

In a post on X, PDP wrote, "Regarding a derogatory video about our Gujjar community doing rounds on social media we would like to make it abundantly clear that the man in question is not associated with PDP in any shape or form but keeps barging into our meetings," the party posted on X.

The video showing a group of people raising slogans at a PDP meeting against the Gujjar community surfaced online. PDP President Mehbooba Mufti is pitted against Gujjar leader and National Conference candidate Mian Altaf Ahmad for the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat. Senior PDP leader Naeem Akhtar termed the slogans as "racist" and said PDP does not stand for such acts.

"A video clip on social media with racist slogans against a respected community apparently is from a recent campaign. Condemning it unreservedly, must say this is not what @jkpdp stands for. Mufti sahab struggled all his life to connect people and communities. This is not us. Must disallow," Akhtar posted on X. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Goa bans swimming in waterfalls, quarries

PANAJI, 27 MAY

In view of the upcoming monsoon season, the administration in Goa has prohibited swimming in waterfalls, abandoned quarries, and rivers, among other water bodies, an official said on Monday. Collectors of the North and South Goa districts issued circulars on Sunday warning that failure to abide by the order would amount to a violation of section 188 of the Indian Penal Code. The administration cited that many incidents of drowning were reported in waterfalls, abandoned quarries, rivers, lakes and other water bodies and swimming in these waters poses a risk. The ban on swimming in these water bodies will remain in place until further orders, it stated. Local police inspectors and mamlatdars have been directed to maintain strict vigil. *—PTI*

India will deal with 4 ISIS suspects held in Guj: Lankan govt

COLOMBO, 27 MAY

Sri Lankan government on Monday said India will deal with the four Sri Lankan ISIS suspects arrested at Ahmedabad airport last week, while authorities would probe if they have been party to any acts of terrorism in the island nation. Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on 19 May arrested four Sri Lankans with links to the banned outfit Islamic State (IS) who were allegedly on a mission to carry out terror activities in India following the directions of their Pakistan-based handler. "India would deal with them according to their law. Sri Lanka would investigate if they have been party to any acts of terrorism and abetted any group while being in Sri Lanka, and will deal with them to our law," Justice Minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe said. *—PTI*

Man loses ₹1.07 cr in share trading fraud

THANE, 27 MAY

A 48-year-old man from Maharashtra's Navi Mumbai township has allegedly been duped of Rs 1.07 crore after being lured by fraudsters into share trading for good returns, police said on Monday. A case was registered in this connection on Sunday against 15 people, including owners of an app and a website, and a probe was on into it, they said. The fraudsters contacted the victim, resident of Kharghar, on various occasions between 13 February and 5 May, assured him lucrative returns by getting into share trading and allegedly made him pay money in different bank accounts, Navi Mumbai cyber police's senior inspector Gajanan Kadam said. *—PTI*

DJ shot dead at bar in Ranchi, accused held from Gaya

RANCHI, 27 MAY

A disc jockey (DJ) was shot dead at a bar, police said on Monday. The firing incident took place on the intervening night of Sunday and Monday. CCTV footage of the incident went viral on social media platforms, in which it is seen that a man, only in shorts with his face covered and a rifle in hand, enters the bar and shoots at the chest of the DJ from point blank range. The accused fled after the incident, police said. The deceased was identified as Sandip Pramanik, a resident of West Bengal. Ranchi (SSP) Chandan Kumar Sinha told PTI, "The accused has been nabbed from Alipur police station area in Gaya with the help of Bihar police." The accused was identified as Abhishek Singh alias Vicky, a resident of Ranchi. Abhishek's three friends including are also being interrogated. *—Salar News with agencies*

We don't trust Guj govt: HC on Rajkot fire lapse

It says municipal commissioners from 2021 must be held accountable

AHMEDABAD, 27 MAY

Gujarat High Court on Monday came down heavily on the Rajkot civic body over the game zone fire which left 33 people dead, and said it does not have faith in the state machinery which gets into action only after innocent lives are lost.

The court pulled up Rajkot Municipal Corporation and asked whether it had turned a blind eye to such a big structure coming up in its vicinity, after the RMC's lawyer submitted that the TRP game zone had not asked for requisite permissions.

A special bench of Justices Biren Vaishnav and Devan Desai was hearing a suo motu PIL on the game zone fire incident.

"Have you gone blind? Did you fall asleep? Now we do not trust the local system and the state," the court raged when told fire safety certification hearings have been unresolved for four years.

Civic body gets into action only after lives are lost, says HC *PHOTO: PTI*

The court also observed that all the Rajkot municipal commissioners, from the time the TRP game zone was set up in 2021 till the time of this incident (on 25 May) "should be held accountable for the tragedy that occurred," and directed them to furnish separate affidavits.

Gujarat government ordered the suspension of six officials. The officials have been held responsible for their "gross negligence in allowing the game zone to operate without necessary approvals," a government release stated.

Those who have been suspended are Rajkot Municipal Corporation's town planning department assistant engineer Jaideep Chaudhary, assistant town planner for RMC Gautam Joshi, Rajkot Roads and Buildings department's deputy executive engineers MR Suma and Paras Kothiya, and police inspectors VR Patel and NI Rathod, as per orders passed by the respective departments.

- Gujarat government ordered suspension of six officials. The officials have been held responsible for their "gross negligence in allowing game zone to operate without approvals

The state government has formed a special investigation team and announced an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh to the kin of each deceased. Central government has announced Rs 2 lakh to the next of kin. *—PTI*

DELHI HOSPITAL FIRE

Grieving parents get bodies of babies

PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Bodies of five of seven newborns killed in an east Delhi neonatal hospital fire have been handed over to their families after post-mortem, police said on Monday.

The bodies of the other two newborns will be handed over after autopsy on Monday, an officer said.

The police said one newborn was claimed to have died hours before the fire broke out but that can be verified after the autopsy.

Five oxygen cylinders exploded when a fire broke out at a neonatal hospital in the Vivek Vihar area here, according to the FIR registered by Delhi Police in connection with the incident in which seven newborns were killed.

The police have arrested Dr Naveen Khichi, the hospital's owner, and Dr Aaksh -- who was on duty at the time of the fire late on Saturday.

Both the arrested accused will be produced in a Karkardoma court in the afternoon. The police may seek their custody for further interrogations, the officer said. Forensic teams and an inspector from the Electricity department will visit the spot on Monday to ascertain the exact cause of the fire, the police said.

Delhi government will issue directions to all private and state-run hospitals to complete a fire audit by 8 June and submit a compliance report, Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said on Monday. *—PTI*

Fire breaks out at UP hospital, none hurt

Baghpat. 27 May

A fire broke out at Astha Hospital in the Baraut area of Baghpat district in Uttar Pradesh on Monday, said officials. Chief Fire Officer Amarendra Pratap Singh stated that upon receiving the information, four fire tenders promptly arrived at the scene and swiftly extinguished the flames. "There were 12 patients inside and all of them were evacuated safely. There are no casualties. The cause of the fire is unknown as of now," Singh said. Pratap Singh added that the initial investigation says that the cause of the fire is due to a motor short circuit but at present it is not clear so the investigation is going on to know the cause of the fire. *—ANI*

Manjhi to return Padma award amid threat

NARAYANPUR, 27 MAY

Traditional medicine practitioner Hemchand Manjhi, renowned for his stellar work from a remote village in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district, on Monday said he will return his Padma Shri award, after he received threats from Naxalites.

Manjhi, popularly known as Vaidyaraj, also said he will discontinue his practice.

The 72-year-old traditional medicine practitioner last month received Padma Shri, the country's fourth highest civilian honour.

Naxalites on Sunday night set two under-construction mobile towers in Chameli and Gaurdand villages under Chhotedongar police station limits of the district on fire and put up banners and dropped pamphlets there threatening Manjhi, police said.

The pamphlets also had a picture of Manjhi in which he is seen receiving the Padma Shri award from President Droupadi Murmu.

Naxalites have alleged that Majhi helped in the commissioning of the Aamdai Ghati iron ore project in Chhotedongar area of Narayanpur and received huge kickbacks for it, a charge denied by him in the past.

Hemchand Manjhi
PHOTO: X/MOAYUSH

Naxalites had earlier also levelled the same allegations against Manjhi and threatened him with dire consequences. Manjhi again refuted the charges and said he had already clarified to villagers that he has no connection with the iron ore mine.

He said that after discussing with his family, he has decided to return the Padma Shri award and discontinue his traditional medicine practice.

"I will return the Padma Shri award. Maoists say how I got the award from the President. I did not demand the award as I got it for my service to the people since I was no year 20-year-old. I give jad-booti (herbal medicines) for different ailments." *—PTI*

Pune crash: 2 docs held for changing teen's blood samples

The samples were replaced on directions of doctors *PHOTO: PTI*

PUNE, 27 MAY

Pune police on Monday said the blood samples of a 17-year-old boy allegedly involved in a car crash were thrown into a dustbin and replaced with another person's samples on the directions of a doctor from the Sassoon General Hospital.

A court on Monday remanded two doctors and an employee of Sassoon General Hospital arrested in connection with the Porsche crash in police custody till 30 May.

The juvenile's father had called the doctor and offered him allurements to replace the blood samples, Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar said at a press conference here. As the juvenile's blood samples were replaced, the report which was received on Sunday from the hospital showed no traces of alcohol.

Two IT professionals died after their motorcycle was hit by a speeding Porsche allegedly driven by the minor in the early hours of 19 May in Kalyani Nagar area of Maharashtra's Pune city.

Kumar said they have arrested Dr Ajay Taware, head of the Sassoon General Hospital's Forensic Medicine department and Dr Shrihari Halnor, the chief medical officer of the state-run hospital.

"The investigation also revealed that it was the juvenile's father who had called Dr Ajay Taware and offered him allurements to replace the blood samples," Kumar said.

The juvenile's father made multiple calls to Dr Taware.

—ANI

NOIDA: 1 DEAD AFTER BEING HIT BY SPEEDING CAR

NOIDA, 27 MAY

An accident occurred in Noida resulting in the death of an elderly man after being struck by a speeding car, said a police official.

The deceased was identified as Janak Dev. The incident took place on Sunday in the Noida Sector 24 area of Gautam Buddh Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh. After hitting the deceased the accused fled away from the spot.

According to Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP) Noida, Manish Kumar Mishra, the incident was reported by the victim's son, Pradeep.

"A man named Pradeep from Sector 24 informed the police that his father was hit by a car and he died in the accident," Mishra said.

Mishra further said that the police have launched an investigation into the matter.

"A case was filed and the investigation is underway. The body has been sent for a post-mortem report," Mishra said. *—ANI*

MYSTERIOUS DEATH

Slain Dalit youth's sister dies in MP

SAGAR, 27 MAY

Anjana Ahirwar, who had lodged a case last August claiming her brother, a Dalit, was beaten to death by some persons pressuring her for a compromise in a harassment case, died on Sunday after she fell from an ambulance carrying her uncle's body in Sagar.

Notably, Anjana's uncle Rajendra Ahirwar was beaten to death on Saturday night by some persons over an old enmity, police sources said.

"Rajendra Ahirwar, 24, died of injuries he had sustained in a clash between two groups under Khurai police station limits. "

Notably, Anjana Ahirwar had alleged that her brother Nitin Ahirwar alias Lalu was killed on 24 August, 2023, by some people who used to harass her, prompting a sit-in protest by Congress leader Digvijaya Singh in Barodia Nonagir village.

Nitin Ahirwar was allegedly beaten to death by a group of people over an old enmity in Sagar district last August. Following his death, Anjana Ahirwar lodged an FIR alleging her brother was murdered as some persons were pressuring her for a compromise in the harassment case. *—PTI*

Assam: 3 remain trapped inside illegal rat-hole mine for 2nd day

Dibrugarh, 27 May

Three people remained trapped inside an illegal rat-hole mine in Assam's Tinsukia district for the second consecutive day on Monday as efforts continued to rescue them, officials said. Officials feared that the trio might have died but their deaths could be confirmed if their bodies were retrieved. The incident took place in Ledo's Tikok West mining site between Bargolai and Namdang areas around 12.30 am on Sunday. *—PTI*

B'desh cops reach Kolkata to probe MP's murder

KOLKATA, 26 MAY

A Bangladesh police team, which arrived here on Sunday afternoon, said they will seek cooperation from West Bengal CID and conduct a thorough probe into the murder of MP Anwarul Azim Anar.

The team expressed its desire to interrogate the arrested suspects and visit Baranagar, where Anar resided, along with speaking to the MP's friend and the landlord of the house where he stayed.

Speaking to PTI anonymously, a senior state CID officer affirmed their readiness to assist the Bangladesh detectives in every possible way. He said all evidence gathered by the state CID regarding the case would be shared with them.

The search for the missing MP began when Gopal Biswas, a resident of Baranagar and an acquaintance of Anar, lodged a complaint with local police on 18 May, stating that Anar, who arrived in Kolkata on 12 May for medical treatment, had gone missing.

According to Kolkata Police, circumstantial evidence indicated that the MP was first strangled and killed after which his body was chopped into pieces and dumped in different areas. Traces of his body or body parts are yet to be found. *—PTI*

TIME TO FOCUS

Himachal tourism stakeholders seek connectivity

SHIMLA, 27 MAY

Irrespective of which party forms the next government, infrastructure development and fixing connectivity issues should be the main focus in Himachal Pradesh, stakeholders of the state's tourism industry said.

The state and central government should complete projects on proposed airport constructions, improve rail connectivity and build facilities along the highways for tourists, they said.

The tourism economy of Himachal Pradesh accounted for seven per cent of state GDP amounting to Rs 14,000 crore, and generates 14.2 per cent direct and indirect employment, as per the latest economic survey.

Candidates of both BJP and Congress contesting the Lok Sabha elections from Shimla, Mandi and Kangra seats have mentioned promotion of tourism and better connectivity as their priorities. Candidates in Dharamshala and Lahaul and Spiti assembly seat have also made similar promises.

Tourism accounts for 7% of state's GDP *PHOTO: UNSPLASH*

Voting for the Lok Sabha elections in Himachal Pradesh will be held on 1 June.

Poor connectivity and paucity of parking spaces affects the tourism industry as tourists face inconvenience, Dharamshala Hotel and Restaurant Association president Ashwani Bamba told PTI.

Jammu and Kashmir scores over Himachal Pradesh in the tourism sector as it has better air connectivity with airports that allow big planes to land, he said.

Federation of Himachal Hotels and Restaurant Associations (FOHHRA) president Gajender Thakur told PTI that roadside facilities should be developed along the highways in line with foreign countries. Services such as petrol stations, motels, restaurants, car repair and other necessary facilities should be provided at one place, he said.

Despite the flood and rain-related damage to the state, the state recorded six per cent increase in tourist inflow in 2023 as compared to the previous year, with 1.6 crore tourists visiting the state during the year. *—PTI*

Human sacrifice: Man kills 4-year-old son in Chhattisgarh; held

BALRAMPUR, 27 MAY

In a suspected case of human sacrifice, a "mentally unsound" man has allegedly killing his four-year-old son by slitting his throat in Chhattisgarh's tribal-dominated Balrampur district, police said on Monday.

The man's family members informed the police that he had claimed to be having hallucinations and hearing voices asking him to "sacrifice" someone, they said.

The incident took place on the intervening night of Saturday-Sunday in Mahuadih village under Shankargarh police station limits following which the accused, identified as Kamlesh Nagesia, 26, was arrested, a police official said.

After having dinner, the man, his wife and their two children slept in a room of their house.

The man later woke up and chopped a hen with a knife in the courtyard of the house. He then brought his elder son, who was asleep, in the courtyard and allegedly slit his throat, leading to his death, the official said.

When his wife woke up and did not find the child, she came outside and asked her husband about their son. The accused told her that he killed his child to "offer sacrifice", the official said.

The woman informed other family members who live in the neighbourhood and villagers who then contacted the police, he said.

He had earlier also tried to kill his mother but his family members prevented him from doing so, he said. *—PTI*

SHIMLA FOREST FIRE

Flames billow out after a fire broke out in a forest near residential area, in Shimla, on Sunday night
PHOTO: PTI

LGBTQs are more accepted but politics hasn't caught up

Madhu Bai says she is like a rainbow. She rose from a storm, fleetingly spread joy and then returned to the sky.

The 44-year-old made history in 2015 when she became the first trans person to be elected a mayor in India. She won in Raigarh, in the central state of Chhattisgarh.

But when her term ended in 2020, Madhu returned to her old life without a pension or government benefits. She dances and sings with other hijras, or trans women, at weddings and birth ceremonies - a common livelihood in India's transgender community.

Madhu has no intention of re-joining politics. She says she is tired and thinks it's too polarised.

"I fought, won and worked for the people. Now I want to live for myself."

Madhu's short but successful political foray in India is a rarity in a field where the LGBTQ community is still heavily underrepresented.

It's perplexing, activists say, in a democracy where acceptance of sexual and gender diversity has been on the rise and the community has seen many wins.

In 2014, the Supreme Court officially recognised transgender people and their rights to welfare and other government benefits. Four years later, it scrapped a colonial-era ban on gay sex.

Over half of Indian adults now believe same-sex marriage should be legal, according to a Pew survey.

But LGBTQ Indians cannot only rely on the courts for change, as a ruling from the top court to not legalise same-sex unions demonstrated last year.

Judges declared that changing the law was a matter for politicians, not the justice system.

Campaigners say that LGBTQ politicians are the best advocates for their community. Yet in this year's general election, no major political party has fielded a single openly LGBTQ candidate.

Indian elections are expensive, and contesting independently without political funding is costlier. But she had no option after the two main political parties rejected her.

When she won, she thought leaders would take her seriously. They didn't.

At her first meeting, she says, members of several parties walked out. She alleges that a local leader threatened to slap her because he found her dance videos offensive. There were also days, in the beginning, when Madhu said she felt unsure whether she could use the women's washroom around party workers.

"People loved me and my work, but rivals hated my guts," she says. "Behind the ridicule and abuse, I know they were all thinking the same thing: 'How could a hijra be the mayor?'"

The only official data on India's LGBTQ population is the government estimate: 2.5 million. But survey estimates suggest the true figure could be over 135 million.

This year's election campaign comes months after Supreme Court decided to not legalise same-sex unions.

Three Opposition parties have promised to recognise same-sex couples legally, but the governing - which polls suggest is likely BJP to win a historic third term - has not.

"LGBTQ struggles need to be seen through the lens of caste privilege," says Grace Banu, a Dalit (formerly untouchable) trans woman activist from the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

Born in a poor family, she says she first faced discrimination because of her caste, and then over her gender.

When she came out at the age of 14, her school barred her from taking classes and made her sit under a tree as punishment. When she resisted, her parents put her in a psychiatric hospital to "cure her illness".

"I would tell myself that this cannot be my destiny," she says. "One day, I ran away to make my own fate."

Today, Banu is a software engineer, the first trans woman with an engineering degree in her state, and considers herself a mother to 12 trans women.

She lives in Chennai with a clan of three trans women, all of whom are also involved in the anti-caste and trans rights movement.

The 44-year-old recently petitioned an Indian court seeking "horizontal reservations", or separate quotas for transgender people in government jobs, within the existing quotas for historically disadvantaged communities.

At the other end of Chennai, in an upscale apartment along the sea, lives Apsara Reddy, a trans woman and spokesperson of AIADMK, one of Tamil Nadu's main political parties.

A former journalist with degrees from Australia and the UK, Ms Reddy's is a life of luxury: she drives a shiny silver Jaguar, collects art and wears the finest of silk saris.

The battle for equality taking place in the courts made it difficult for them to build relationships with other marginalised communities under a broader fight for equality.

Back in Raigarh, it gets hard to get by sometimes, without a fixed pay. But given the life she's had, she's not constrained by what may lie ahead.

"Whatever it is, it's definitely not politics," she says, her jaunty sing-song voice soaring into a laugh.

But she hopes others from the community seek political opportunities, so that queer people are no longer seen as oddities.

"Who knows, maybe then the country will see a rainbow again."

—BBC News

Despite progress, LGBTQ Indians have not found meaningful political representation ***PHOTO: ANI***

SALAR سالار

What should you know about new Covid variants- 'FLiRT'?

New coronavirus variants dubbed "FLiRT" are circulating the world and growing dominant in the U.S., and although cases and deaths are on a decline, some experts worry these variants may cause a summer surge as more Americans gather for summer holidays, since evidence suggests the variants may highly transmissible.

The FLiRT variants are new strains of COVID-19 that begin with either KP or JN, and they're named after the same set of mutations they have each independently picked up, according to Johns Hopkins University.

The new variants are descendants of the JN.1 variant, which is an offshoot of omicron and made of the majority of cases in the U.S. in December and earlier this year.

FLiRT variants have two extra mutations on their spike proteins than JN.1 has, so some experts believe these mutations may make it easier for the variants to evade people's immunity, according to Yale Medicine—though current data suggests the strains aren't more severe than previous ones.

A FLiRT variant called KP.2 is the dominant variant in the U.S., making up 28.2% of cases in the two-week period ending in May 11, and KP.1.1—another FLiRT variant—made up over 7% of cases, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Because of their potential to evade immunity, experts are concerned these variants may cause a spike in cases as people gather for several summer holidays, though U.S. cases and deaths have fallen by 0.1% and 14.3%, respectively, even though hospitalizations have risen by over 9% since March.

Some experts think KP.2 and KP.1.1 could be more transmissible than previous strains: Early data suggests KP.2 may be "rather transmissible" since its two new mutations help "its ability to transmit, but also now evades some of the pre-existing immunity in the population," Dr. Andrew Pekosz, a virologist at Johns Hopkins University, told NBC.

What are flirt variant symptoms?

There isn't any evidence the FLiRT variants' symptoms are different or worse than previous strains. The most common Covid symptoms include respiratory issues like coughing, runny nose, congestion and a sore throat, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, body aches, fatigue, headaches and loss of taste or smell.

Do vaccines protect against flirt?

Because the FliRT variants are descendants of omicron, experts believe the most up-to-date COVID-19 monovalent vaccines—which focus on omicron strains—should offer some protection against these variants. The Food and Drug Administration's vaccine advisory committee postponed its meeting to discuss new recommendations for the COVID-19 vaccines until June 5.

The meeting was postponed to "allow for additional time to obtain surveillance data and other information," so the committee "will have more up-to-date information when discussing and making recommendations," according to the announcement. The World Health Organization announced in April its vaccine committee encourages countries to make new monovalent vaccines that focus on JN.1's lineage, so it's possible new vaccines in the U.S. may provide more protection against the FLiRT variants ahead of an anticipated respiratory illness surge this fall and winter.

Big number

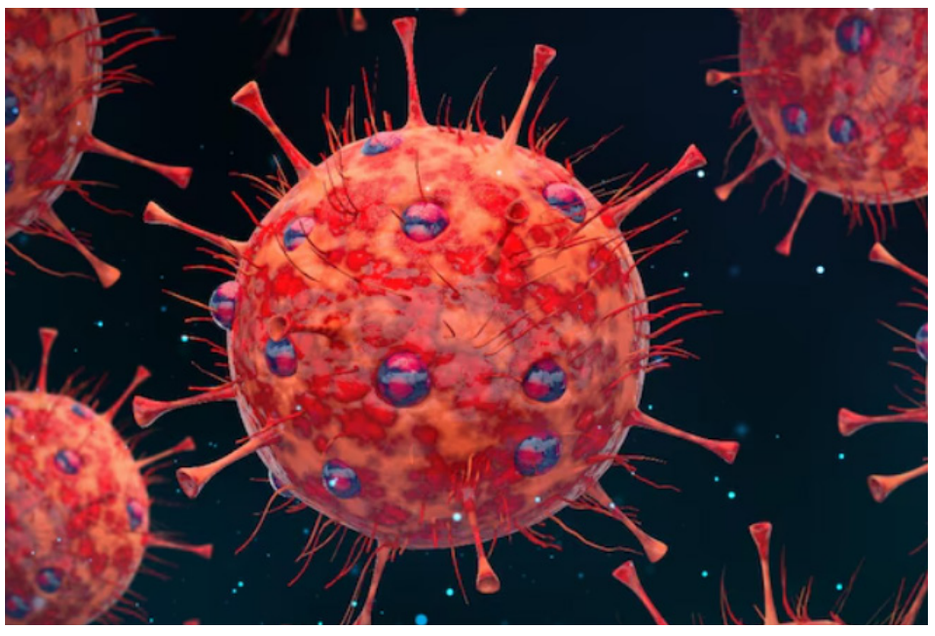
135,330. That's how many global cases of COVID-19 were reported to WHO in the 28 days ending in May 5. There were 29,500 cases reported to WHO during the week beginning on May 5, down from the 44.5 million cases reported during the peak of December 2022, though several countries—including the U.S.—haven't reported updated numbers to WHO.

Key background

FLiRT variants have been reported in several countries including the U.K. and Israel. Last week, WHO said KP.2 and KP.3—another FLiRT variant—made up 9.6% and 20% of cases globally. The agency classifies these two variants as "variants under monitoring," which means they may have early signs of growth compared to other variants, or genetic changes that may potentially affect virus characteristics. Global cases decreased by 48%, hospitalizations declined by 35% and deaths decreased by 44% between March and April, according to WHO.

The U.K. Health Security Agency said last week it will continue to monitor the new variants, but "there is no change to the wider public health advice at this time."

—Courtesy Forbes



FLiRT variants are new strains of COVID-19 that begin with either KP or JN, and they're named after the same set of mutations they have each independently picked up ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Mount Everest's filthy base camp, traffic jams, deaths remain a concern

Climbers have to navigate thick traffic jams, a filthy, sprawling base camp — and increasingly, death — while trying to get to the world's highest Instagram hot spot.

Renewed attention is being paid to the crowded conditions on Mount Everest, where two missing climbers were believed dead this week after part of an icy ridge collapsed. At least 7 deaths occurred on Mount Everest in 2024 already.

Social media videos appear to show a line of hundreds of climbers stranded in the aftermath of the tragic Tuesday incident in which British climber Daniel Paterson, 39, and his Nepali guide Pas Tenji Sherpa, 23, were dragged down the side of the mountain after a chunk of hardened snow overhanging the edge of a cliff suddenly fell, BBC reported.

The clips were just some of the dozens of images of an apparent constant rush hour getting to the top of the world. More than one clip on X in recent months shows climbers screaming as they watch dead bodies slide by them.

Paterson and Tenji were with a 15-person group that had reached the top of the world's tallest peak at 29,032 feet. They were still unaccounted for as of Saturday.

In a separate incident, Kenyan climber Joshua Cheruiyot Kirui, 40, was found dead and his guide Nawang Sherpa, 44, remained missing after they vanished from the mountain on Wednesday.

"Everest; the highest, the dirtiest and the most controversial place on Earth," wrote The Northerner on X. "Humans bypassing corpses, leaving people dying, ignoring help cries, making it dirtiest place with pollution & human wastes; all for the glory of summit. When will it stop?!"

Indian mountaineer Rajan Dwivedi, who successfully summited Everest at 6am on 19 May, wrote on Instagram that "Mt. Everest is not a joke and in fact, quite a serious climb."

"This video captured shows [sic] what we face on one rope line and negotiating interchanges during the traffic for upstream and downstream! The main reason is weather window to avoid the fierce cruising jet streams that could be 100-240mph!! For me, coming down was a nightmare and exhausting while huge line of climbers were coming up to maximize on the weather window."

Everest's popularity hasn't waned, despite frequents accidents and deaths on the mountain.

The seemingly never-ending traffic jams at Mount Everest ***PHOTO: EVERESTER.RAJ/INSTAGRAM***

The season is at its peak at the moment – with hundreds of climbers jammed side by side along the Hillary Step.

Mountaineering guide Vinayak Jaya Malla witnessed the collapsing cornice last week after successfully reaching the summit and then starting back down.

"Many climbers were stuck in the traffic and oxygen was running low. I was able to start breaking a new route for the descending traffic to begin moving slowly once again."

Dwivedi said had "mixed feelings" after the climb. "They were shaking and crying causing a traffic jam," he said.

Climbers have turned Everest into a high-altitude garbage dump

Spring is go time for climbers who hope to summit Mount Everest, Earth's highest peak above sea level. Hundreds of mountaineers from around the world travel to Asia in April and May, headed for base camps in Nepal and Tibet.

But jagged peaks won't be the only thing they see. Especially on Everest's more heavily traversed Nepal side, they'll find fields of garbage – including cans, bottles, plastic and human animal excrement.

Each year, more than 60,000 trekkers and climbers visit the Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone, a high-altitude swath of the Khumbu region in northeast Nepal that includes Everest and seven other peaks. Some 400 to 500 climbers attempt to summit Everest every year.

The trash problem first became evident in the 1980s and 1990s, when climbing on the mountain and trekking in Khumbu began to increase. Climber and trekker numbers have further skyrocketed in the past 20 years.

Most coverage of this issue focuses on negative and sensational aspects, such as the frozen bodies of climbers who remain where they died on the mountain because removal operations are risky and expensive.

Climbers who aim to summit Everest typically spend up to two months on the mountain, including weeks making short, incremental ascents above base camp and back down again. This enables them to acclimate to the altitude before climbing to higher camps and then to the summit.

Lots of equipment, food and packaging, plus animals and porters, means a lot of garbage. Eventually most of this refuse is dumped into unsightly landfills a short distance from local villages. There it is burned, adding particulates and toxic chemicals to the air. The ash is buried, where it can contaminate groundwater.

Solutions for sustainable tourism

Recognizing the scale of this problem, initiatives are in progress to develop solutions.

Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee, created by local Sherpa people in 1991, is an Indigenous nonprofit organization that is responsible for monitoring garbage in the permit-required mountains and peaks. In 2014, the government of Nepal began requiring every mountaineer who climbs above the Everest base camp to bring back 18 pounds (8 kilograms) of solid waste from the mountain or forfeit a US$4,000 deposit.

—NY Post/ The Conversation

PHOTO: PTI

Lithuanian Prez wins landslide in re-elections

VILNIUS, 27 MAY

Lithuania's President, Gitanas Nauseda, has been re-elected in the final round of the Baltic nation's Presidential elections, as partial results showed him far ahead in the two-way race against his opponent, Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte, reported Al Jazeera. Notably, this is the second time Nauseda and Simonyte have competed in presidential run-off elections. Earlier in 2019, Nauseda beat Simonyte and bagged victory with 66 per cent of the vote. As President, Nauseda has a semi-executive role, which includes heading the armed forces, chairing the defence and national security policy bodies, and representing the country at NATO and European Union summits. Lithuania also fears it could be Moscow's next target. *—ANI*

Pak asks Afg to hand over plotters of Bisham attack

ISLAMABAD, 27 MAY

Pakistan has demanded the Taliban government in Afghanistan to hand over outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) terrorists, who were involved in the attack on Chinese engineers in Shangla district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, reported ARY News. The attack, which took place on 26 March in Bisham city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Shangla district, claimed the lives of five Chinese engineers along with one Pakistani citizen. The incident took place when the convoy was travelling between Islamabad and a hydroelectric dam construction site in Dasu in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The District Inspector General (DIG) of Malakand said that a suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into a convoy of Chinese nationals. *—ANI*

Thai court convicts Opp lawmaker for royal insult

BANGKOK, 27 MAY

A Thai court on Monday sentenced lawmaker Chonthicha Jangrew of the Move Forward, a progressive Opposition party to two years in prison after finding her guilty of defaming the monarchy in a speech she made during a protest rally three years ago. Her charges stemmed from her speech in 2021 that demanded the release of all political prisoners. She was found guilty for parts of the speech concerning how the government then led by prime minister Prayuth Chan-ocha had amended laws to give King Vajiralongkorn more power to control the palace wealth, which is managed by the Crown Property Bureau. *—PTI*

Gunman held after wounding 5 people in LA area home

SAN FERNANDO, 27 MAY

A 61-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of shooting and wounding five people at a Los Angeles area home and then firing at a police helicopter after locking himself inside, authorities said. Officers responded shortly before 11.30 pm Saturday and found four gunshot victims at the residence in San Fernando, police said. A fifth victim was later found at a hospital, where San Fernando police determined he had driven himself, ABC 7 reported. The suspect locked himself in the home and shot at a Los Angeles Police Department helicopter before being taken into custody, police said. No other injuries were reported. The relationship between the suspect and the shooting victims wasn't known Sunday. Details about what led to the gunfire or information about the victims' conditions were not released. *—PTI*

Papua Guinea: 2,000 buried in landslide

Govt figure is around three times more than United Nations' estimate of 670

MELBOURNE, 27 MAY

The Papua New Guinea government said a landslide on Friday buried more than 2,000 people and has formally asked for international help.

The government figure is around three times more than a United Nations' estimate of 670.

In a letter seen by The Associated Press to the United Nations resident coordinator dated Sunday, the acting director of the South Pacific island nation's National Disaster Center said the landslide "buried more than 2000 people alive" and caused "major destruction".

Estimates of the casualties have varied widely since the disaster occurred, and it was not immediately clear how officials have arrived at the number of people affected.

Australia prepared on Monday to send aircraft and other equipment to help at the site of a deadly landslide in Papua New Guinea as overnight rains in the South Pacific nation's mountainous interior raised fears that the tons of rubble that buried hundreds of villagers could become dangerously unstable.

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said his officials have been talking with their Papua New Guinea counterparts since Friday, when a mountainside collapsed on Yambali village in Enga province, which the United Nations estimates killed 670 people. The remains of only six people had been recovered so far.

Heavy rain fell for two hours overnight in the provincial capital of Wabag PHOTO: PTI

"The exact nature of the support that we do provide will play out over the coming days," Marles told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"We've got obviously airlift capacity to get people there. There may be other equipment that we can bring to bear in terms of the search and rescue and all of that we are talking through with PNG right now," Marles added.

Papua New Guinea is Australia's nearest neighbour and the countries are developing closer defence ties as part of an Australian effort to counter China's growing influence in the region. Australia is also the most generous provider of foreign aid to its former colony, which became independent in 1975.

Heavy rain fell for two hours overnight in the provincial capital of Wabag, 60 kilometres from the devastated village. A weather report was not immediately available.

Emergency responders were concerned about the impact of rain on the already unstable mass of debris lying 6 to 8 metres (20 to 26 feet) deep over an area the size of three to four football fields. *—PTI*

Israeli airstrike in the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel PHOTO: PTI

Israeli airstrikes kill 2 senior Hamas commanders in Rafah

DEIR AL-BALAH, 27 MAY

Palestinian health workers said Israeli airstrikes have killed at least 35 people and hit tents for displaced people in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, and "numerous" others were trapped in flaming debris. Gaza's Health Ministry said women and children made up most of the dead and dozens of wounded.

The attacks came on Sunday, two days after the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to end its military offensive in Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population had sought shelter before Israel's incursion earlier this month. Tens of thousands of people remain in the area while many others have fled.

Footage from the scene of the largest airstrike showed heavy destruction. Israel's army confirmed the strike and said it hit a Hamas installation and killed two senior Hamas militants. It said it was investigating reports that civilians were harmed. Defence Minister Yoav Gallant was in Rafah on Sunday and was briefed on the "deepening of operations" there, his office said.

A spokesperson with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said the death toll was likely to rise as search and rescue efforts continued in Rafah's Tal al-Sultan neighbourhood about two kilometres northwest of the city centre.

The airstrike was reported hours after Hamas fired a barrage of rockets from Gaza that set off air raid sirens as far away as Tel Aviv for the first time in months in a show of resilience more than seven months into Israel's massive air, sea and ground offensive.

There were no reports of casualties in what appeared to be the first long-range rocket attack from Gaza since January. Hamas' military wing claimed responsibility. *—PTI*

PAK: 3 SUSPECTS DETAINED IN SCRIBE'S KILLING

ISLAMABAD, 27 MAY

Pakistan police have detained three suspects in Kamal Lond village for the killing of journalist Nasrullah Gadani, according to Geo News.

The police launched a targeted action to arrest the killer of slain journalist Nasrullah Gadani, who died on Friday last week. Gadani suffered bullet wounds on Friday and was then laid to rest in Ghotki on Saturday.

Nasrullah Gadani, known for his courageous journalism, worked for a Sindhi newspaper and shared his reports through social media platforms. He was renowned for his fearless reporting against local feudal lords, political figures, and government officials.

The incident occurred while Gadani was en route from his residence to the Mirpur Mathelo Press Club. Armed assailants in a car ambushed the journalist on Jarwar Road near Deen Shah, firing upon him before fleeing the scene.

Following the attack, police shifted him to Civil Hospital Mirpur Mathelo, where he received emergency medical aid and he was then sent to Rahim Yar Khan for surgery, Geo News reported. Earlier on Sunday, a joint protest was held in front of the Karachi Press Club against the journalist's killing and condemned "the atrocities committed by tribal chiefs and feudal lords", Geo News reported. The protesters demanded the arrest of the journalist's killers and those, including political and social activists, murdered before him. *—ANI*

N Korea says, will next launch satellite into space; notifies Japan

TOKYO, 27 MAY

North Korea has notified Japan of its plans to launch a satellite-carrying rocket before 4 June, the Japanese government announced Monday, according to a report by Kyodo news agency citing the country's coastguard.

The development that came ahead of today's trilateral meeting in Seoul, involving leaders of South Korea, China and Japan- the first such summit in over four years.

During a joint press conference with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and China's Premier Li Qiang following the meeting in Seoul, Japan's Prime Minister Fumion Kishida emphasised on the importance of North Korean denuclearization and said that the stability of the Korean Peninsula is in the "common interest" of the three Asian countries.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Seoul PHOTO: X/ @JPN_PMO

At the outset of the trilateral summit, Kishida urged North Korea to cancel its planned satellite launch, with Yoon, the chair of the meeting, saying it would endanger regional and global peace and stability, Kyodo reported.

Chinese Premier Li, called for a "political settlement" of issues relating to North Korea through dialogue. *—ANI*

US pledge support for Taiwan after China's drills

TAIPEI, 27 MAY

A US congressional delegation met Taiwan's new leader on Monday in a show of support days after China held drills around the self-governing island in response to his inauguration.

Rep. Andy Barr, the co-chair of the Taiwan caucus in the US Congress, said the United States is fully committed to supporting Taiwan militarily, diplomatically and economically. "There should be no doubt, there should be no scepticism in the United States, Taiwan or anywhere in the world, of American resolve to maintain the status quo and peace in the Taiwan Strait," the Republican from Kentucky said at a news conference in the capital, Taipei, after the delegation met Taiwan President Lai Ching-te.

China regards Taiwan as a renegade province that must come under its control, by force if necessary. The US, like most countries, does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan but is bound by its own laws to provide the island with the means to defend itself.

The Chinese government expressed strong opposition to the congressional visit, saying it undermined China-US relations and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, referring to the waterway between China and Taiwan.

The lawmakers' visit "ran against the political commitment of the US government to maintain only unofficial relations with Taiwan, sending a seriously wrong signal to the separatist force of Taiwan independence," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said in Beijing.

The new foreign minister, Lin Chia-lung, noted the recent Chinese drills and called the American delegation's visit "an important gesture of solidarity" at a critical time. *—PTI*

WEATHER IMPACT

7 dead as cyclone Remal batters Bangladesh coasts

A man salvages a cart and other material as water flows on to the Kuakata beach in Bangladesh PHOTO: PTI

DHAKA, 27 MAY

At least seven people were killed and millions were left without power as severe cyclone 'Remal' lashed the coasts of Bangladesh with devastating winds of up to 120 kph and storm surges, inundating hundreds of villages.

'Remal' weakened into a cyclonic storm on Monday morning, sustaining wind speeds of 80-90 kilometres per hour, following landfall around midnight of Sunday, the Met Department said.

The department said that the weather system, which lay 150 km northeast of Sagar Island at 5.30 am, brought torrential rain and moved northeastwards to weaken further into a cyclonic storm.

The cyclone has been accompanied by gusty winds and heavy rains, impacting areas including Barisal, Bhola, Patuakhali, Satkhira, and Chattogram.

In Patuakhali, one person was washed away by a storm surge while returning home to bring his sister and aunt to a shelter.

Another person died in Satkhira after falling as he ran for cover during the storm.

Five people were killed in Barishal, Bhola and Chattogram, Dhaka-based Somoy TV reported.

In Mongla, a trawler sank, leaving two people, including a child, missing.

The rural power authority has cut off electricity to 15 million people in coastal areas to minimise the damage from 'Remal', BD News reported.

The power outages have lasted over 12 hours in some areas, but electricity workers are preparing to restore the connections once the storm subsides. The cyclone is expected to continue its northward trajectory, bringing increased rainfall and weakening to a lower intensity within the next 2-3 hours, the Met Department of Bangladesh said in a special bulletin at 3:30 am on Monday.

On Sunday, Bangladesh evacuated nearly 800,000 people from vulnerable areas. Bangladesh shut down the airport in the southeastern city of Chattogram and cancelled all domestic flights to and from Cox's Bazar. *—PTI*

AT LEAST 18 DEAD IN US TORNADOES

HOUSTON, 27 MAY

At least 18 people, including two children, have been killed in powerful storms that ravaged the states of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas in the central US, destroying homes and plunging thousands into darkness amid rising temperatures.

Seven fatalities were reported in Cooke County in Texas, near the Oklahoma border, where a tornado on Saturday night ripped through a rural area near a mobile home park, officials said.

"It's just a trail of debris left. The devastation is pretty severe," Cooke County Sheriff Ray Sappington said.

The dead included two children, aged two and five, and three members of a family, the sheriff said.

Sappington said the death toll was likely to rise as search and rescue operations were underway for some people who remained missing on Sunday morning.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott on Sunday said about 100 people were injured by the Saturday tornado, noting that the exact toll was "hard to tell with certainty", CBS News reported.

More than 200 houses were destroyed and more than 100 others were damaged, Abbott said. *—PTI*

16 people killed in Afghanistan floods

KABUL, 27 MAY

As many as 16 people, including women and children, have died in the recent floods in Baghlan and Badakhshan provinces of Afghanistan, TOLO News reported.

According to local officials in these provinces, 500 houses have been completely or partially destroyed in the floods. The local authorities have said that the floods have impacted Dand-e-Ghori, Doshi, the city of Pul-e-Khumri, the village of Morchak in central Badakhshan, and several other parts of these provinces.

Taliban-appointed Baghlan Police Command Chief Abdul Ghafoor Khadem said, "Last night, a very strong flood occurred. The major casualties we have are in the Larkhab area of Doshi district in Baghlan province. In Larkhab, approximately six people were martyred, including three children, one woman, and two men, and over 300 houses have been destroyed."

Taliban-appointed Head of the Natural Disaster Management in Badakhshan, Mohammad Kamgar said that ten members of one family and one other person was injured due to the floods.

Meanwhile, several families who have lost all their belongings due to the floods have lambasted the delayed arrival of aid. They called for assistance from the Taliban-led government and aid agencies. More than 300 have died over the past week in the devastating floods in several parts of Afghanistan. *—ANI*

GLOBAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

WHO seeks $7 billion through new financing mechanism

GENEVA, 27 MAY

The World Health Organization has launched a new 'Investment Round' aiming to raise USD 7 billion of funds. This comes ahead of the 77th World Health Assembly that begins Monday at the headquarters of the 194-member strong United States agency.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Sunday said that the commitment increases would contribute USD 4 billion to the agency's budget of USD11.1 billion over the four years from 2025-through 2028.

Taking to X, the WHO Chief said that the world is facing a difficult time with multiple overlapping challenges of conflict, climate change, displacement, poverty, inequality, polarization, disease outbreaks.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus PHOTO: PTI

WHO Chief stated that the 'Investment Round' is designed to ensure that voluntary contributions, which are currently the majority of the WHO funding, will be more predictable, flexible, and sustainable.

"Our new Investment Case outlines why and how supporting WHO is essential for progress in global health and saving millions of lives. It will be launched on May 28 during the Assembly," Tedros said.

The 77th World Health Assembly is being held in Geneva from 27 May to 1 June with the theme "All for Health, Health for All."

The Investment Round is the result of recommendations by the WHO Working Group on Sustainable Financing and was approved at the 154th Meeting of the WHO Executive Board in January 2024.

Qatar Minister of Health Dr Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari announced a contribution of USD 4 million in fully flexible funds to the Investment Round, and an intention to contribute further. *—ANI*

1,400 girls escape from school fire in Pakistan

PESHAWAR, 27 MAY

Nearly 1,400 girl students had a lucky escape on Monday when they were safely evacuated from a school building that was engulfed by a massive fire in a remote mountainous region of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to a media report.

A rescue official said the fire swept through the Government Girls Higher Secondary School in Haripur district's Sirikot village while hundreds of students were inside.

Firefighters along with the local residents began putting off the blaze, he said. The official said the fire brigade vehicles faced trouble reaching the site of the incident because of the mountainous terrain.The rescue department confirmed that no loss of life occurred and said half of the school building was constructed with wood. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 83.14 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 27 MAY

The rupee pared its initial gains and settled for the day lower by 4 paise at 83.14 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, mirroring the benchmark indices that erased their gains and ended the day off their record-high levels. Forex traders said the rupee settled in a narrow range as the weakness of the American currency in the overseas market supported the rupee, while elevated crude oil prices in the international market restricted the upmove. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.08, then touched an intra-day high of 83.05 but soon pared the gains and settled for the day lower by 4 paise at 83.14 (provisional) against the American currency. *—PTI*

Gold, silver prices rebound on strong global cues

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Gold and silver prices rebounded sharply on Monday after falling for three straight sessions, with the precious metal jumping Rs 220 to Rs 72,820 per 10 grams in the national capital, tracking a strong trend in the overseas market due to escalating tensions in the Middle East. Gold had closed at Rs 72,600 per 10 grams in the previous session on Friday, according to HDFC Securities.Silver prices also bounced Rs 1,050 to Rs 92,850 per kg. In the previous session, it had finished at Rs 91,800 per kg. Gold resumed trading on a positive note, supported by soft US dollar, and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East increased after Israel carried out airstrikes in Rafah, leading to an increase in safe-haven demand for the yellow metal, Gandhi said. Additionally, silver also traded higher at USD 30.75 per ounce.*—PTI*

Best Agrolife Q4 net loss widens to ₹72.49cr price

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Agrochemicals firm Best Agrolife Ltd on Monday reported widening of its net loss to Rs 72.49 crore for the fourth quarter ended 31 March, 2024 on price erosion.The company had posted a loss of Rs 8.41 crore in the year-ago period.Total income for the company, which has plants in Uttar Pradesh and Jammu Kashmir, fell 46.68 per cent year-on-year to Rs 135.39 crore, the company said in a statement.For the full fiscal year 2023-24, Best Agrolife posted a 45 per cent drop in net profit to Rs 106 crore, from Rs 192 crore in the previous fiscal. Total revenue grew 7.31 per cent to Rs 1,873.32 crore on higher growth in branded sales. —PTI

DCM Industries Q4 profit rises 23pc to ₹38.64 cr

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

DCM Shriram Industries on Monday posted a 23 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 38.64 crore for the fourth quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal from a year earlier, on lower expenses. The company, which is into sugar, industrial fibre and chemicals business, had reported a net profit of Rs 31.53 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal, according to a regulatory filing.Total income declined to Rs 516.61 crore during January-March quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal from Rs 541.58 crore in a year earlier.Expenses, however, remained lower at Rs 461.75 crore as against Rs 493.60 crore in the said period.For the full fiscal year 2023-24, DCM Shriram Industries posted a 92 per cent jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 115.39 crore, compared to previous fiscal year.*—PTI*

Sensex scales past 76K, Nifty hits new high

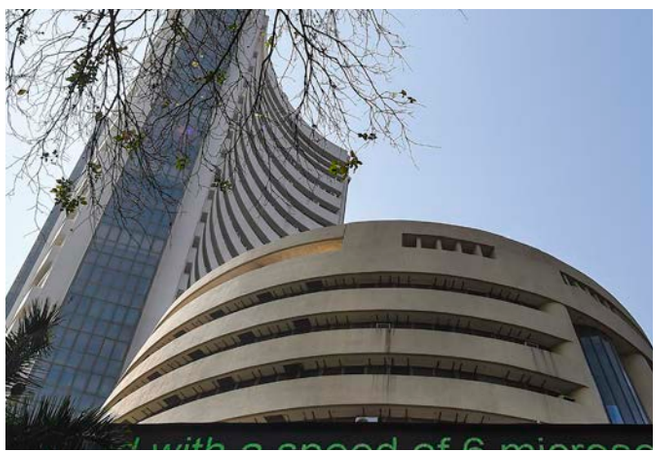
The 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 19.89 points

MUMBAI, 27 MAY

Sensex scaled the 76,000 level for the first time while Nifty hit a new lifetime peak before closing marginally down in highly volatile trade on Monday as investors booked profits in the last 30 minutes of trade.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 19.89 points or 0.03 per cent lower at 75,390.50. Intra-day, the barometer climbed 599.29 points or 0.79 per cent to an all-time peak of 76,009.68 following gains in select banking, financial and IT shares. However, investors preferred to book profits at record levels and the index declined around 835 points from the day's high to hit a low of 75,175.27.

Broader Nifty of the NSE declined by 24.65 points or 0.11 per cent, to end at 22,932.45. The 50-issue barometer rose by 153.7 points or 0.66 per cent to hit a new lifetime high of 23,110.80 during the day. However, it tanked around 240 points at the fag-end due to selling in oil, energy and FMCG shares.



Broader Nifty of the NSE declined by 24.65 points or 0.11 per cent, to end at 22,932.45. PHOTO: PTI

Index heavyweight Reliance Industries declined nearly 1 per cent, dragging the benchmark indices into the negative. Selling in FMCG giant ITC also eroded gains.

Equity benchmarks were on a record-breaking rally for the third straight day ahead of the results of Lok Sabha polls and a rally in global markers. The results of the ongoing general elections will be declared on 4 June.Sensex breached the historic 75,000-mark for the first time on 9 April.

It took 31 trading sessions for the benchmark to climb 1,000 points to reach the 76,000-mark on Monday. The BSE benchmark took 21 trading sessions to reach 75,000-mark on 9 April after hitting the 74,000-level on 6 March.

- Equity benchmarks were on a record-breaking rally for the third straight day ahead of the results of Lok Sabha polls and a rally in global markers. The results of the elections will be declared on 4 June

From the Sensex firms, Wipro, NTPC, Sun Pharma, Mahindra & Mahindra, ITC and Reliance Industries were among the biggest laggards.

IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were among the major gainers.In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory.European markets were also quoting in the green. Wall Street ended with gains on Friday.Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.38 per cent to USD 82.44 a barrel. *—PTI*

HIGH GAINS

Adani Ports shares end over 1 pc higher, hit 52-week high before Sensex entry

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Shares of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) on Monday ended over 1 per cent higher and hit the 52-week high level during the day.

This comes less than a month before the company's entry into the 30-share BSE Sensex from June 24 replacing IT major Wipro.

The stock went up 2.93 per cent to hit the 52-week high of Rs 1,457.25 during the day on the BSE.

It ended at Rs 1,431.75, up 1.13 per cent.

Shares of Wipro, however, declined 2.36 per cent to Rs 452.55. During the day, it dropped 2.57 per cent to Rs 451.55.

The stock of Wipro was the biggest laggard among the 30-share BSE Sensex firms.

This would mark the first inclusion of any Adani Group firm in Sensex. The group has 10 listed firms.

The changes will be effective from June 24, 2024, Asia Index, a joint venture between S&P Dow Jones Indices and BSE, said in a statement on Friday, adding that the replacement is a part of a periodic review.

Both APSEZ and Wipro are constituents of NSE's Nifty index.

Changes have also been announced in S&P BSE 100, S&P BSE Bankex, S&P BSE Sensex Next 50, and S&P BSE Sensex 50. *—PTI*

The stock went up 2.93 per cent to hit the 52-week high of Rs 1,457.25 during the day on the BSE PHOTO: PTI

- The stock went up 2.93 per cent to hit the 52-week high of Rs 1,457.25 during the day on the BSE. It ended at Rs 1,431.75, up 1.13 per cent.

NAZARA SELLS 6.38 PC STAKE TO EXISTING INVESTOR

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Nazara Technologies' promoter Mitter Infotech has sold 48.8 lakh equity shares, representing 6.38 per cent stake to existing investor Plutus Wealth Management through a block deal, according to a release on Monday.

The promoters of Nazara Technologies will retain control of the company, with Nitish Mittersain continuing in his current role as CEO and joint Managing Director.

"Mitter Infotech LLP, a promoter of Nazara Technologies Limited, has sold 48,84,000 equity shares, representing 6.38 per cent of the issued share capital to Plutus Wealth Management LLP through an on-market transaction in the block deal window of the stock exchange on 27 May, 2024," the release said.

According to the release, the block trade will provide liquidity for the promoters who have dedicated 25 years to the company's growth. *—PTI*

HC ORDER CHALLENGED

The dispute arose due to a breach of trust by SpiceJet and has caused hardship to KAL Airways for more than a decade PHOTO: PTI

KAL Airways, Maran seek ₹1.3K cr from Spicejet

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran on Monday said they will seek more than Rs 1,323 crore in damages from SpiceJet and its chief Ajay Singh as well as challenge the recent Delhi High Court order in the ongoing dispute between the two sides.

On 17 May, a division bench of the court set aside a single judge bench order that had upheld an arbitral award asking SpiceJet and its promoter Ajay Singh to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest to Maran.

The bench allowed the appeals filed by Singh and SpiceJet challenging the single judge's order, passed on 31 July, 2023, and remanded the matter back to the court concerned to consider the petitions challenging the arbitral award afresh.

Against this backdrop, Maran and his firm KAL Airways have decided to challenge the ruling after consultation with their legal counsel.

The decree holders -- KAL Airways and Maran -- "believe that the aforesaid judgement is deeply flawed and warrants further scrutiny".

"In parallel, they are also seeking damages in excess of Rs 1,323 crore, as determined by FTI Consulting LLP, United Kingdom, a globally renowned firm that specialises in estimation of losses arising out of breach of contractual commitments," KAL Airways said in a statement on Monday.

Further, it said the claim for damages had originally been presented by KAL Airways and Maran before the arbitral tribunal and "has always remained an integral part of their quest for justice".

By pursuing both the challenge to the Delhi High Court judgement and the claim for damages, the decree holders hope to secure a just and equitable resolution to the contentious dispute, the statement said.

The dispute arose due to a breach of trust by SpiceJet and has caused "enormous hardship to both KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran for more than a decade," it added.

According to the statement, they will pursue the execution of the arbitral award, seeking a refund of the pending dues amounting to Rs 353.50 crore. *—PTI*

Ajooni eyes ₹200 cr from Moringa production by FY 25-26

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Animal healthcare solutions provider Ajooni Biotech is eying additional Rs 200 crore annual revenue from the commercial production of Moringa by financial year 2025-26.

The leading animal feed manufacturer on Monday unveiled its plans for commercial production of Moringa by the financial year 2025-26.

"We anticipate generating a significant additional annual revenue of Rs 150 crore to Rs 200 crore from our Moringa operations, with projected profit margins of 40-50 per cent from FY2026 onwards," he said.

Meanwhile, Ajooni Biotech aims to raise Rs 43.81 crore from the ongoing rights-issue, which began on 21 May and will close on 31 May.

The funds raised through the rights issue will be instrumental in propelling us towards our goal of commencing commercial production of Moringa by FY26, Singh added.

Ajooni Biotech's rights issue signifies a strategic move towards unlocking the immense potential of Moringa in the animal healthcare market, creating a sustainable and profitable future for Ajooni and its stakeholders, the company said.Looking ahead, Ajooni Biotech has partnered with Unnati Agri-Allied & Marketing Multi State Cooperative Society Limited (UAMMCL), supported by Department of Biotechnology (Government of India) & Punjab State Council for Science & Technology to revolutionize pure-veg cattle feed and Moringa production. The company has received an export order from Avon Animal Health, Bangladesh to deliver animal health products and educate farmers on their efficacy.

In FY24, Ajooni Biotech reported net profit soaring 93.75 per cent to Rs 2.17 crore. *—PTI*

Ajooni Biotech on Monday unveiled its plans for commercial production of Moringa by the financial year 2025-26 PHOTO: PTI

- The leading animal feed manufacturer on Monday unveiled its plans for commercial production of Moringa by the financial year 2025-26. In FY24, Ajooni Biotech reported net profit soaring 93.75 per cent to Rs 2.17 crore

Hyundai sets up EV charging stns in Chennai

CHENNAI, 27 MAY

Automaker Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) on Monday announced the inauguration of its fast electric-powered vehicles (EV) charging station here, and said this was first of the company's target of installing 100 such facilities across Tamil Nadu.

The 180 kW DC fast charging station, comprising of 150 kW and 30 kW connectors, has been set at Spencer Plaza here, and would cater to compatible four-wheelers irrespective of brand and model, a company release said.

EV owners can access the charging facility on HMIL's own Charger Management System in the myHyundai App, for easy location, navigation and pre-booking of charging slots, making digital payments and remote charging status monitoring.

In addition to the fast public charging station, more than 170 of the charging points currently available in Tamil Nadu are mapped in the "EV Charge" section of myHyundai app for customer convenience. This app is open and accessible to all Hyundai as well as non-Hyundai EV users, the release added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

- EV owners can access the charging facility on HMIL's own Charger Management System in the myHyundai App, for easy location, navigation and pre-booking of charging slots, making digital payments and remote charging status monitoring

'ONGC's high investments to delay deleveraging'

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

A step-up in investments at Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) will slow down its deleveraging over the next 12-24 months, eroding headroom for the state-owned firm's 'bbb+' standalone credit profile, S&P Global Ratings said on Monday.

Stating that ONGC's financial results for the fiscal year ended on 31 March, 2024, were in line with expectations, S&P said despite a decline of 2-3 per cent in the company's domestic oil and gas production volumes and lower realisations in fiscal 2024, EBITDA grew to Rs 1.1 lakh crore from Rs 93,600 crore in fiscal 2023.

"We attribute the higher EBITDA to the strong performance of downstream subsidiaries - Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL), which together accounted for about 30 per cent of the group's EBITDA during the year. We forecast ONGC's EBITDA will remain at about Rs 1 lakh crore over fiscal years 2025 and 2026," it said.

ONGC's integrated operations will support earnings resilience.

The firm's production volumes should rise gradually over fiscal years 2025 (April 2024 to March 2025) and FY2026 as the company scales up oil and gas production from its block in the Krishna Godavari (KG) basin in India. *—PTI*

- ONGC's integrated operations will support earnings resilience. The firm's production volumes should rise gradually over fiscal years

ENHANCING CAPABILITIES

Ghana ties with Jio to build telecom infra

MUMBAI, 27 MAY

Ghana has signed deals with a Reliance Jio subsidiary, Tech Mahindra and other vendors to build 4G and 5G infrastructure as the African country aims to enhance its telecom capabilities.

Ghana's state-backed Next-Gen Infrastructure Company (NGIC) has partnered with Jio's arm Radisys, Tech Mahindra and Nokia to build the necessary infrastructure for delivering affordable 5G mobile broadband services.

Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, the West African country's minister for communication and digitalisation, told reporters here that India was a "strategic choice" due to its similar demographics and Ghana wants to replicate the Indian story on telecom penetration.

"Your (India's) demographics are just like us, the Jio model was rolled out just a few years ago, so the learnings are still fresh," she added.

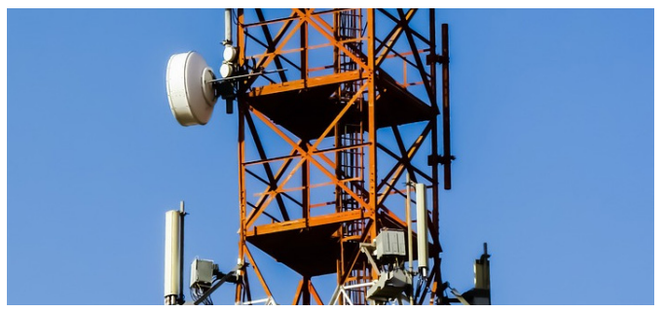
NGIC has been allocated 5G spectrum and local telcos will be utilising the shared infrastructure to roll out the services in the next six months. As per reports, the overall contract is over USD 200 million.

Ekuful said Ghana is a part of the 33-nation Smart Africa alliance, and other countries in the continent will be closely watching the rollout to see whether they can also emulate the same locally.

When pointed out that Indian vendors have not executed such deals in the past and why Ghana chose them over the Chinese suppliers, she said, "It was a strategic choice for us. We don't want to get caught up in any of the geopolitics that is currently going on. We want what is the best for our national interest."

"Ghana wants to leverage India's experience in the field," she added.

Speaking on the deal, Radisys' Chief Executive Arun Bhikshesvaran said, "Our communications platform and digital applications will help create new digital experiences that empower the Ghanaian community and foster sustainable and inclusive development." A statement said the lives of Ghanaians will be enhanced across various spheres including education, healthcare, and digital payments through the modern telecom network. *—PTI*



Ghana's state-backed Next-Gen Infrastructure Company (NGIC) has partnered with Jio's arm Radisys PHOTO: PIXABAY

PHOTO: X @FABRIZIOROMANO

Xavi wins his last game as Barcelona coach

MADRID, 27 MAY

Xavi Hernández ended his stint as Barcelona coach with a 2-1 win at Sevilla in the final round of the Spanish league on Sunday. Robert Lewandowski and Fermin López scored for Barcelona, which announced Friday it was parting ways with the former midfielder with a year left on his contract. "We didn't want this to end, but these are decisions made by the club," Xavi said. "We didn't win titles but we were on the right track. But soccer is like this, the directors will make their decisions. The response by the players was wonderful." Barcelona players bid farewell to Xavi after the match. "We will always wish Xavi the best," goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen said. "He's been a friend for many years and it's not easy to let him go," he said. *—AP*

Subhankar loses in semifinals of Austrian Open

GRAZ, 27 MAY

Indian shuttler Subhankar Dey lost in straight games to Indonesia's Prahdiska Bagas Shujiwo in the semifinals of the Austrian Open International challenge here. The 30-year-old Indian, who had won the 2018 SaarLorLux Open Super 100, on Sunday suffered a 17-21 15-21 loss to Prahdiska in a 42-minute match at Raiffeisen Sportpark. Subhankar, who was a member of the Indian men's team that won the bronze medal in the 2020 Badminton Asia team championship in Manila, looked in good touch this week. He defeated Poland's Mikolaj Szymanowski in round 16, Germany's Matthias Kicklitz in round 32 and Austria's Luka Wraber in the quarterfinals. Men's doubles pair of PS Ravikrishna and Akshan Shetty are the key challengers. *—PTI*

Leclerc achieves 'ultimate dream' after Monaco GP

MONACO, 27 MAY

Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc said he had "tears in my eyes" as he was on the verge of completing what he described as "the ultimate dream" and winning the Monaco Grand Prix. Leclerc has seemed destined to win this race for a long time - but somehow fate stood in his way for a while. As it turned out, it served to make the moment even sweeter when it finally arrived. Leclerc was born in Monaco. The 26-year-old grew up on the streets on which he drove so consummately through all three days of the event this year. As a child, he watched the race from the balconies of friends whose apartments overlooked the track, and his ambition to become a F1 driver was born. *—BBC*

Nat'l rally sprint c'ship to kickstart in Chennai

CHENNAI, 27 MAY

The Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI) Indian National Rally Sprint Championship 2024 will kick off from 1 June onwards in Chennai. Spanning six rounds across India, the championship is set to captivate motorsport enthusiasts and competitors alike.The marquee competition will commence on 1-2 June 2024 at the Madras International Circuit in Chennai, while Round 2 will follow on 20-21 July in Bengaluru to complete the South Zone qualifiers. The action then moves to Chandigarh (North Zone) for Round 3 on 5-6 October, 2024. Round 4 will take place in Guwahati (East Zone) on 23-24 November and Round 5 unfolds in Goa (West Zone) on 7-8 December. The Top five riders from each qualifier will feature in the Finals on the 15-16 December, 2024 in Pune. *—ANI*

At 39, Wawrinka beats Murray

Rafael Nadal loses on possible French Open farewell

PARIS, 27 MAY

Jannik Sinner, Stan Wawrinka Alexender Averev and Iga Swiatek in action during their Ronald Grarros matches: *PHOTO: X/ @ATPTOUR*

After Stan Wawrinka ended Andy Murray's stay at the French Open yet again — and this time, it was perhaps Murray's last singles appearance at Roland Garros — the two long-time opponents, both in their late 30s, met at the net for a handshake, an embrace and a lengthy chat.

Wawrinka, whose trademark one-handed backhand helped him put together a 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 victory in the first-round contest Sunday night, then joined fans in applauding for Murray as he headed toward the locker room.

"It was emotional, for sure. We're getting closer to the end," said Wawrinka, who has won 10 of their 23 meetings since the first in 2005. "We have a lot of respect for each other." Wawrinka, at 39, is just the third man of at least that age to win a match at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament since 1980. Murray just turned 37, and this contest had the second-oldest combined age for two men in Paris since 2000.

"Obviously disappointed. ... He gave me very few opportunities," said Murray, who was broken early in each set while going 0 for 2 on his break chances. "Physically, tennis is not easy for me nowadays."

By the end, his movement was not what it usually is, even after having hip replacement surgery several years ago. Murray recently returned after tearing ankle ligaments at the Miami Open in March and is 1-3 since coming back.

Before play began Sunday, tournament director Amélie Mauresmo said she was putting off a planned farewell ceremony for Nadal, but said this weekend he didn't want to close the door on a return.

Sinner plays flawless Paris opener

Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner made light work of Christopher Eubanks to get his French Open campaign off to a bright start.

Italy's Sinner struggled with a hip injury in the build-up to Roland Garros but he moved well in a routine 6-3 6-3 6-4 win. Sinner only looked troubled when serving out the match, handing his American opponent two break points with a double fault before recovering to seal victory.

"The hip is good, I am very happy. The general shape is not at 100% yet so we try to build every day," the 22-year-old said. AP/BBC News

Iga Swiatek reacts after winning the match

Nadal loses on possible French Open farewell

Rafael Nadal's return to the French Open - and possible farewell - ended at the first hurdle as the 14-time champion lost in straight sets to German fourth seed Alexander Zverev.

Nadal has become synonymous with Roland Garros but, in front of a partisan crowd baying for a Spanish victory, the 37-year-old could not replicate the level which has made him almost unbeatable on the Paris clay.

The 22-time Grand Slam winner was beaten 6-3 7-6 (7-5) 6-3 by the in-form Zverev.

Harmanpreet sing celebrates after scoring the second goal with his teammates against Argentina *PHOTO: X/@THE HOCKEYINDIA*

Hockey: Harmanpreet's hat-trick guides India to 5-4 win over Arg

ANTWERP, 27 MAY

Captain Harmanpreet Singh led from the front with a sensational hat-trick as the Indian men's hockey team recorded a thrilling 5-4 win over Argentina in the FIH Hockey Pro League here.

Besides Harmanpreet (29', 50' and 52'), Araijeet Singh Hundal (7') and Gurjant Singh (18') also scored for India, while Federico Monja (3'), Nicolas Keenan (24'), Tadeo Marucci (54') and Lucas Martinez (57') were on target for Argentina on Sunday.

India made a good start, keeping the ball for most of the first quarter and came up with accurate passes to make their way into the Argentina striking circle. However, Argentina drew first blood when Federico found the back of the net from a close range to give them a 1-0 lead.

In response, India equalised quickly as Araijeet scored a brilliant field goal. India also earned a penalty corner but failed to capitalize on it as the first quarter ended 1-1.

India started the second quarter on a high note. The fast counter-attacking aggressive approach helped India extend their lead after Gurjant scored an excellent field goal. India were slightly dodgy the next few minutes after scoring the goal as they gave up possession and were punished when Argentina broke into a quick counter, making their way through the left flank.

It was Nicolas Keenan who drove into the Indian circle, beating the defenders to strike the ball into India's goal levelling the score at 2-2. However, India earned a PC with a minute remaining in the quarter and Harmanpreet made it 3-2 in India's favour. The third quarter was entertaining with both teams displaying quick-fire hockey. India secured a penalty corner but couldn't convert it as Harmanpreet's shot was blocked well by the Argentina goalkeeper. With both teams defence standing tall, the third quarter remained goalless. *—PTI*

KKR players highlight contributions of Gambhir and Nayar after title win

CHENNAI, 27 MAY

Drenched in emotion, Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) players highlighted the contributions of mentor Gautam Gambhir and assistant coach Abhishek Nayar in moulding the team into a champion outfit that outclassed Sunrisers Hyderabad to lift its third IPL trophy here on Sunday.

The likes of Andre Russell and Harshit Rana found it tough to describe the feeling of being IPL champions, even as they praised Nayar.

KKR crushed Hyderabad by eight wickets in a completely one-sided final after bowling out their opponents for 113, the lowest ever total in an IPL title clash. This was KKR's third IPL title.

"I cannot tell how happy I am," Harshit, who picked up two wickets in the final, said after the triumph.

Even the seasoned Russell was lost for words as he tried to hold back his tears. "No words to describe. It means so much. I am happy that all of us were very disciplined and worked towards one goal. This franchise has done a lot for me. It's a big gift from all of us to them," Russell said.

Team coach Gautam Gambhir in a chat with Chandrakant Pandit and Shreyas Iyer *PHOTO: ANI*

> **My dream of seven years is complete. Finally, I lift the trophy. I am proud of my whole team and GG (Gautam Gambhir) sir. It was God's plan. I am headed to Noida first, and then, I will be going to the United States of America. You guys watch, I will also be lifting the World Cup**
>
> -Rinku Singh, KKR Batsman

Varun Chakravarathy, who has has had a successful season with his spin bowling, lauded Nayar's contributions. "All I can think right now is of the person who built this Indian core: Abhishek Nayar. 'Please come here'," he said, asking the former Mumbai batter to join them.

Venkatesh Iyer, who remained not out on 52 off 26 balls in an easy chase of 114, also mentioned Nayar's role in the team's success. "This win is for the fans who turned up year after year and waited for 10 years," Venkatesh said.

Having lost the toss, KKR produced a clinical effort with the ball to dismiss SRH for 113, the lowest ever total in an IPL title clash. KKR chased down the target of 114 with as many as 57 balls to spare, even as team mentor Gautam Gambhir and head coach Chandrakant Pandit watched the action unfolding in the middle from the dugout.

STARC HINTS AT QUITTING ONE FORMAT

CHENNAI, 27 MAY

After resisting the lure of lucrative private leagues for almost a decade because of his commitment towards the 'Baggy Green', Australian pacer Mitchell Starc has hinted that he might quit one format from his roster which may open up doors for a lot of franchise cricket.

Starc, who was bought for a record 24.75 crore by KKR, was magnificent at the business end of the tournament. He ended up with 17 wickets, including five in the two knock-out games, to engineer a dominant title-triumph for the Shah Rukh Khan-owned team.

"For the last nine years, I certainly prioritised Australian cricket. I have pulled out often to have a chance to give my body a break and spend some time away from cricket with my wife as well, so that's certainly been where my head has been for last nine years," the 34-year-old Starc said after his match-winning performance for KKR in IPL final.

"Moving forward, I am certainly close to the end of my career than the start. One format may be dropped off as there is long time till next World Cup and whether that format drops off or not, that will open doors for a lot of franchise cricket," the 'King of Swing' said. *—PTI*

BCCI announces cash rewards for IPL's groundsmen

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Describing them as "unsung heroes", Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Jay Shah on Monday announced that groundsmen and curators of all the 10 regular Indian Premier League (IPL) venues will be given Rs 25 lakh each as a token of appreciation for providing "brilliant pitches" during the league. The IPL concluded in Chennai on Sunday with Kolkata Knight Riders lifting their third overall trophy with an eight-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad. "The unsung heroes of our successful T20 season are the incredible ground staff who worked tirelessly to provide brilliant pitches, even in difficult weather conditions," Shah posted on X. *—PTI*

T20 WORLD CUP

Can cricket make inroads into baseball-loving America?

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

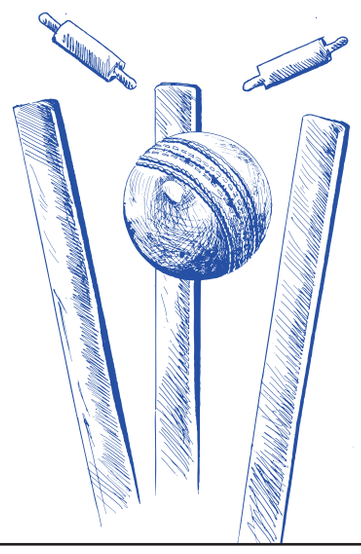
Cricket, a popular pastime in the United States in the mid 1800s, makes a big-ticket return to North American shores through the T20 Word Cup but will it be able to leave an impression on the local audience that knows little to nothing about the gentleman's game?

Cricket globally is driven by India but the International Cricket Council sees huge potential in the American market and claims there are already 30 million fans that follow the game in the massive country.

The T20 showpiece is also seen as a major stepping stone to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, where cricket will make a comeback after 128 years when the big event kicks off on 1 June. A total of 16 games will be played across three venues -- New York, Dallas and Lauderhill -- with a majority of 55 matches scheduled in the Caribbean including the knock-outs.

Day three of the competition will have South Africa and Sri Lanka battling it out in New York, where the first ever international cricket game was held between USA and Canada back in 1844. It was a phase when the sport was played widely across America before a much faster alternative in Baseball gained prominence during the Civil War in the 1860s.

- Cricket globally is driven by India but the ICC sees huge potential in American market



"...(T20) it's entertainment and that's what people look for. That's what Americans look for, you know, they want entertainment," says legendary West Indian Brian Lara, one of the most recognisable cricketers in the world but someone who admits that he could walk around Miami without getting a second look.

"You know, you speak to an American and I've done that many times and they'd say 'you play a game for five days and then you end up in a draw? What's that all about?' So it's, it is difficult," he explains the challenge of selling Test cricket to an American, who might just warm up to the shortest format though. *—PTI*

INDIAN SHUTTLERS LOOK TO WIN AT SINGAPORE OPEN

SINGAPORE, 27 MAY

Top Indian shuttlers, including PV Sindhu, HS Prannoy and Lakshya Sen, will look to hit top gear at the USD 850,000 Singapore Open, beginning here on Tuesday, with an additional objective of fine-tuning their preparations for the Paris Olympics.

The Summer Games are just two months away and the Olympic-bound shuttlers will have three more tournaments -- Australian Open super 500, Indonesia Super 1000, Canada Open super 500 -- to hone their skills and shake off any cobwebs ahead of the quadrennial mega event.

Recently-crowned Thailand Open champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have looked in the best shape for the Olympics, while Sindhu too has geared up with a runner-up finish at the Malaysia Masters on Sunday.

Lakshya and Prannoy will also hope for a deep run into the event to receive the ideal boost in the build-up to the Paris Games. However, it will be a tough test of their temperament as some big guns stand in their way in the Super 750 tournament. *—PTI*

BOXING WORLD QUALIFIERS

Boro wins opening round bout

BANGKOK, 27 MAY

Former world youth champion Ankushita Boro defeated Namuun Monkhor of Mongolia in 60kg category but Abhimanyu Loura lost against Ireland's Kelyn Cassidy in 80kg division in the second Boxing World qualifiers for Paris Olympics here on Monday.

Boro started strongly against her young Mongolian opponent. She effectively blunted Monkhor's speedy movements by tactically shifting gears to carve out a 4-1 win after three keenly-contested rounds.

However, it was an opposite result for Loura. The National Championships bronze medallist came into the second-round clash high on confidence after beating Bulgaria's 10-time national champion Kristiyan Nikolov in a thrilling bout.

But Cassidy was well prepared for the long reach of his opponent and went on to win 0-5 despite Loura giving his all in the final round. On Tuesday, Sachin Siwach (57kg), Abhinash Jamwal and Nishant Dev will look to continue their march towards securing an Olympic quota place. This tournament is the final chance for the boxers to book a Paris Games berth. Sachin will face Frederik Jensen of Denmark, Jamwal will take on Colombia's Jose Manuel Viafara Fory and Nishant Dev will be up against Otgonbaatar Byamba-Erdene of Mongolia. India have already secured three quotas for the Paris Games. Nikhat Zareen (women's 50kg), Preeti (54kg) and Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) have confirmed their Paris berths by winning bronze medals at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X@BFI_official